'A magisterial synthesis of archaeology, history, anthropology and folklore.'

Jonathan Eaton, *THES*

PAGAN BRITAIN

RONALD HUTTON

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THE RESEARCH WHICH underpins this work was carried out over a period two decades, in which I accumulated many debts of gratitude to rarians, archivists, colleagues and publishers, the list of which would run many pages if expressed in full. In the short term, of the actual writing up, ree stand out. The first debt is to my university, of Bristol, for awarding e a research fellowship in the final year of the process, so that my work uld be completed on time following an exacting and exhilarating period as ad of department. The second is to Heather McCallum, of Yale University ess, for having pursued me so relentlessly as a possible author for a long ne, and treated me so cleverly once she had secured me. The third is to na Adnan, for her customary shrewd encouragement and advice.

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A NOTE ON DEFINITIONS

IT MAY BE wise to define from the beginning the key words employed in is book. At no point will the term ‘art’ be used of the many images painted d carved during British prehistory, even though it is both convenient and nctioned by long scholarly tradition, viz. ‘Palaeolithic cave art’, negalithic art’, ‘rock art’, etc. This is because of the modern connotations the word, as something intended to be decorative and inspirational, giving easure to those who see it, rather than functional. The prehistoric imagery ay indeed have had exactly that purpose, but some or all of it may have erated as well or instead as a form of language, providing information to e observer in the form of directions, lessons, blessings, prayers, curses, ohibitions or declarations; and to use the conventional word obscures that ssibility. That is why more neutral terms such as ‘images’, ‘figures’ or esigns’ will be preferred.

Next come those two old lexical friends, ‘religion’ and ‘magic’. Both ve been fought over extensively by professional colleagues in recent ars, and merely to use the latter, or to use the former in the context of ehistory, may arouse the ire of some, while others may be as severely ovoked by the implication that the latter has a separate identity from the rmer. I have argued at length in a previous publication (*Witches, Druids d King Arthur*) that they can indeed be distinguished, and have a different sence, even though they can easily overlap or blend and magic can form a tegory inside religion. The definitions offered and explained there will be tained here. Religion is characterized as *belief in the existence of spiritual ings or forces which are in some measure responsible for the cosmos, and the need of human beings to form relationships with them in which they e accorded some respect*. When a group of people operates it in the same ay, it becomes ‘a’ religion. Magic embraces *any formalized practices by man beings designed to achieve particular ends by the manipulation and rection of supernatural power or of spiritual power concealed within the tural world*. The word ‘ritual’ has been the subject of equally extensive d complex debate. In previous publications I have used Clifford Geertz’s

vely and simple definition, of ‘consecrated action’, which captures rfectly its sense of action invested with an exceptional formality and eight of meaning, often expressed in repeated patterns. This puts rformance at the heart of ritual, which seems correct, and enables the term th to be linked to religious behaviour and separated from it.

Finally, this book needs a definition of ‘paganism’, a word central to its ing. There is an obvious one: that the term refers to the pre-Christian ligions of Europe and the Near East. This holds the essence of the way in hich it is most commonly used, and is employed here, and retains the iginal positioning of it as something defined by and against the Christian ith. It does, however, beg the question of what religions are, and while that s been answered above, the reply that was provided does have some ock-on effect for the matter now at issue. By highlighting relationships th spiritual beings it confines the term ‘paganism’ to an active worship of e deities associated with those old religious traditions. This is the inimalist’ position, as defined by twentieth-century philosophers of ligion, and one which avoids endless, and irreconcilable, arguments over e extent of the survival of the essence of a religion when the people who ofessed it have been formally converted to another. It draws a boundary hich is at least clear and can usually be recognized in the historical record.

Throughout this book I retain the old-fashioned expression ‘the British les’ to describe the whole complex archipelago with Ireland and Britain at centre. This is not intended as a slight upon citizens of the Irish Republic, ho have long won the right not to be regarded as British, but is purely the sult of geographical accuracy. The alternative term of ‘Britain and Ireland’ ems to forget the Northern Isles, the Hebrides, Man, Anglesey, the islets f Pembrokeshire, and the Isles of Scilly and Wight, all of which play a part and often an important one – in the issues discussed here, and which often ve a strongly marked cultural character of their own. The centrality of itain to the expression is simply a reflection of its size, as the main island the group, as in ‘the Canaries’, ‘the Hawaiian Islands’, ‘the Maltese lands’, and so forth.

A greater personal discomfort attaches to the means of reckoning storical epochs. In a previous book of mine, *Witches, Druids and King*

rthur, I adopted the increasingly fashionable, and religiously neutral, usage BCE and CE, to replace BC and AD, which are specifically Christian. As I plained in the introduction to that book, I myself had no strong feelings on e matter, and have an instinctual wariness of gesture politics; but, none the ss, I accepted that it was a courteous gesture to make towards the ideal of a ulti-faith, multi-ethnic society. My commitment to that kind of society is strong as ever, and will feature prominently in the conclusion to the esent book, but here I have reverted to the older usage. The difference is rely one of context. The new forms are most common among newer blishing houses and in disciplines such as Religious Studies, where the sues involved are most sensitive. That earlier book of mine was placed ith such a publisher and overlapped with the concerns of those disciplines. he present book is devoted almost wholly to history and archaeology, der-fashioned scholarly traditions which have adhered to the BC/AD forms. rchaeologists in particular, who have most to reckon with dates BC (or BCE) ve done so, not because they are usually Christian but because of the verse consideration: that as a group (with striking individual exceptions) ey tend to be less religious than most and so more indifferent to hallmarks particular belief systems. The older usage is also the normal house style Yale University Press, the representatives of which had accommodated y wishes in other respects and whom I was accordingly reluctant to press er this one.

The matter cost me much aching of conscience, till I discussed it with a oman Catholic friend, an Irishman. With the wit and geniality of so many his nation, he replied that to use the traditional forms was itself a gesture inter-faith co-operation, because Christians like him had employed the gan names for days of the week, months of the year and constellations, for nturies without complaint. It therefore seemed to him an appropriate sture of gallantry on my part, this time, to accord the chronological amework in return. His argument won the day, and so during this book I cord the last two millennia as Years of a Lord to whom I owe no personal legiance, but of whose followers I am frequently fond.

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PREFACE

AT THE END of the 1980s, I wrote a book called *The Pagan Religions of e Ancient British Isles*, which was published in 1991. It had two intentions, e first of which was simply to provide an overview, for general readers and ecialists in particular ages and cultures, of how experts interpreted the idence for pre-Christian religion in these islands, from the Old Stone Age ıtil the Middle Ages. On the whole, my task was simply to synthesize their ork period by period, though at times the process did involve making ıoices and priorities of my own, and pointing out moments at which the ews concerned seemed contradictory or problematic. The second intention presented my personal 'take' upon the whole subject, which was to ıphasize more than other authors at that period the difficulty of the idence and the large number of interpretations possible for most aspects of In particular, I wanted to celebrate the latter, as a strength rather than a eakness, and their utility in providing a past into which different people uld read different meanings to inspire and challenge them in the present. or this reason, I gave more explicit consideration than most academic thors to viewpoints separate from, and often opposed to, those of ofessional archaeologists and historians, although this was more often to ıgage with them than to give them equal status. The book was tremendous n to write, and enjoyed reasonable critical and commercial success, and s remained in print for over two decades.

I had always intended, providing that it provoked sufficient interest, to oduce a second edition, but that project gradually turned into a different ıe: to replace it with a work that covered the same ground with new terests and emphases. This book is the result. It is designed to retain the sic utility of its predecessor, of introducing the current evidence for ıcient British paganism to general readers and to students and scholars with ore concentrated expertise. The format is slightly different. Although a nger work, it is devoted principally to Britain and its offshore islands, and akes only occasional and comparative reference to Ireland, in the same anner as to Continental Europe. This is to enable a closer and more

nsidered treatment of the material from Britain and its smaller ighbouring islands, which is so much greater now after two further cades of excavation and publication. More attention is paid to specific es and scholars, and less to modern forms of paganism, because I have blished extensively on those during the intervening period. The emphasis on the potential for differing, and often conflicting, interpretations of the me evidence remains as strong. Underpinning this new book is a great deal ore of my own work than before: indeed, some of that informs every apter, and the quantity grows as the volume goes on.

In addition, this book explicitly poses, and attempts to answer, four more estions. The first is whether it is possible to have either an archaeology or history of prehistoric and early historic British religion, in view of the treme limitations of the evidence. The second is where the limits of lativism lie in the interpretation of the data: how far the latter impose nstraints on the ability of each person to create her or his own imagined ew of the ancient past and how far experts have a right to impose theirs. he third is how much changing cultural patterns in the present, and very cent past, have influenced scholarly reconstructions of ancient paganism. he fourth concerns the extent to which a broad-sweep study such as this ables useful comparisons to be made between approaches to the study of ligious activity in different periods, the specialists in which do not rmally converse with each other. In this manner it intends to offer oughts which may be of value to fellow professionals as well as providing formation and entertainment to those general readers who may be less terested in such theoretical problems.

1

THE PALAEOLITHIC AND MESOLITHIC

HOW RITUAL CAME TO BRITAIN

HUMAN-LIKE BEINGS have been occupying the land which has become itain, on and off, for almost a million years, and probably longer.[1] For ost of that period, the land concerned was a peninsula of the European ainland, representing a remote hilly margin to the great plains which now under the North Sea and to which archaeologists have given the name oggerland'.[2] Whether the first species of human to reach it had a capacity r what we would now call religious belief, and whether such a capacity as possessed by any of those that followed before the arrival of our own, is disputed question. The balance of opinion currently seems to be shifting wards the view that they had, and especially the Neanderthal people who cupied Europe when anatomically modern humans arrived there. The atter, however, is far from decided.[3] What is absolutely clear is that our vn species, *Homo sapiens*, manifested every sign of possessing the cessary imaginative faculty as soon as it evolved, whether as a result of olution, as most Western scholars now believe, or as a divine gift, as is ll the opinion of some adherents to certain faiths. Every test of evidence hich has produced equivocal results when applied to other kinds of human s yielded an unequivocal one in the case of ours, and especially in two eas: the ceremonial burial of the dead, and the production of painted or rved representations, of animals, humans and figures which mix attributes the two. Together with other traces of a heightened sense of imagination d of symbolic behaviour, such as the making of musical instruments and e regular development of new and better technologies of tool-making, ese activities attest strongly to a capacity to conceive of worlds beyond the aterial and the immediate.

Such a capacity was manifested with particular strength as anatomically odern humans reached north-western Europe from about 42,000 BC

ıwards: indeed, the quantity of paintings that survives there from their ınds is probably greater than that found anywhere else in the world from ımans living more than 10,000 years ago. Why this should be has been uch discussed. Some commentators suggest that unusually rich hunting ounds there generated exceptionally large and settled populations of ople with a greater need to mark territory and reinforce group solidarity. hers attribute this artistic productivity to the collision of our human ecies in Europe with an existing one, the Neanderthals, producing an hanced propensity on our part to engage in creative behaviour designed to firm our identity and mark our world.[4] In the 1990s the term ‘the Human evolution’ was coined to describe the quantum leap taken by European aterial culture with the arrival of *Homo sapiens*.[5] Whether or not it is propriate in the world context, it vividly conveys the dramatic change in e archaeological record caused by the arrival of our kind of human. With the study of the earliest epoch of human prehistory, the Palaeolithic or ld Stone Age, reaches a point at which a consideration of religious haviour needs to be part of the process.

Until recently, Britain hardly featured in such an exercise, being garded as one of the most marginal areas of human activity in Palaeolithic ırope. Since the 1990s that position has altered dramatically, as British es have been revealed as important even by global standards. Three in rticular have been outstanding, and in each case the evidence concerned s posed problems that reach to the heart of the archaeology of the laeolithic and raised questions concerning the nature of perception, and of owledge, itself.

Three Special Places: Paviland, Creswell and Cheddar

The first site is the Goat’s Hole cave at Paviland, on the south-western ast of the Gower Peninsula in South Wales. It is associated with an tstanding scholar, William Buckland, the son of a Dorset clergyman who d lost his vision in an accident.[6] Buckland therefore grew up accustomed describing the landscape around them to his father on walks, and this ose observation of it gave him an interest in rock formations. It persisted hen he went to Oxford University, and brought him in 1815 to fill its first ll-time post in the new science of geology. He was especially inspired by

e idea, currently most strongly propounded by French scholars, that rocks ntained the remains of extinct species of animal and plant. This new sense the great age of the planet gave devout Christians such as Buckland the oblem of reconciling the evidence of geology with the testimony of the blical Book of Genesis, and no British scholar attempted more fervently an he, at that period, to find the solution to the problem by practical ldwork. In other respects he was a remarkable individual. His home was ammed with fossils and rocks, but also cages of snakes and frogs, while e vertebrae of Jurassic reptiles were used as candle-holders. Ga piguines amed the floor of his office, and occasionally got eaten when the jackal caped from the living room. His star pet was a bear, which he named glath Pileser after a biblical monarch, and which he sometimes took along academic functions, dressed in a student's cap and gown. These colourful ldities were, alas, symptoms of an unstable as well as of a broad and brave ind, and towards the end of his life he went clinically mad.

1 Major sites in Britain for evidence of Palaeolithic ritual.

In the 1810s, at the height of his powers, he embarked on a campaign of vestigation of caves, which he felt to be ideal sources of evidence for past ges of the earth, as they had been least disturbed by subsequent activity. His st excavation of one, in Yorkshire, met with such success that it drew the tention of local scholars in Gower. In 1822 the doctor and clergyman at the shing village of Port Eynon began to dig in the caves at Paviland, and und bones and flints. They informed the owners of the land, the Talbots of nrice Castle, and the lady of the house, her daughters and her friends ined the investigations. They found so much material in the Goat's Hole at they sent a message to Buckland, who came at once, even though the ason was midwinter, and set about digging in the cave himself. He found eces of ivory, mammoth bones, flint and bone tools, and part of a human eleton, stained with red ochre, which lacked its head and most of the right le. Because there was an Iron Age fort on the cliff top above, he decided at it had been the body of a lady of ill fame, almost literally a scarlet oman, who had kept a tavern in the cave for soldiers from the fort. The ckname 'the Red Lady' has clung to the remains ever since. Buckland's istake may justly be attributed to his dogmatic determination to reconcile e physical evidence with the scriptural account in Genesis, which he lieved forbade him to associate humans with the extinct animals now ing found in the caves: by calling the remains an intrusive burial from a uch later period, he got rid of the problem. Three comments may be made on this story. One is that the Church of England did more to promote owledge of the ancient past at this vital period than to hamper it, by oviding the essential financial support for Buckland himself, as a cleric d a member of an Oxford college, and furnishing a living to amateur tiquarians such as the curate of Port Eynon. The second is that the ominence given to Buckland, though natural, highlights the problems of e emphasis on great individuals in history, obscuring as it has often done e vital role of instigation and support played by the local leaders of Gower ciety. The third is that by packaging the new data in a form which was not mediately offensive to Christian opinion, Buckland made the great age d complexity of the earth much easier for a contemporary audience to cept, and geology a respectable vocation.

During the following hundred years further excavations took place in the ıviland caves, and it became accepted that the Red Lady was a Palaeolithic an, and the first human fossil ever known to science. Renewed interest in m, and the site, was kindled by a project led by Stephen Aldhouse-Green the 1990s, which carried out a fresh excavation in the Goat's Hole and a stematic re-examination of the surviving finds from it.[7] The human bones elded ever older results to each dating process: the current one stands at ound 32,000 BC, making it possibly the oldest ceremonial human burial yet und in Europe.[8] The man concerned was in his prime, between twenty-five d thirty years old, and probably stood around 5 feet 8 inches (173 ntimetres) high and weighed about 154 pounds (73 kilos): not a big person r his time. He had apparently been buried in a two-piece garment dyed red, hich was impractical for routine activities such as hunting, and so esumably of a ceremonial kind. With him were placed hoops of mammoth ory which seem to have been bracelets or castanets, and ivory structures ɛe wands or batons, which were broken before being placed with the rpse. Again, these grave goods are most easily interpreted as having a ual function. At a point where a pocket would have been was a collection perforated periwinkle shells, presumably either decorations for clothing or necklace, or objects to be cast as some kind of divinatory process. From all is evidence, Stephen Aldhouse-Green and his team concluded that the ad man had most probably possessed some kind of spiritual function nong his people. The basic pattern of the burial – the laying out of the dy, the placement of possessions with it, and the significant presence of e colour red – is found in other graves scattered across Europe over the llowing ten thousand years. Such conformity to a continent-wide tradition ggests equally widespread shared belief systems (whatever they were): d the Red Lady is at present the oldest known example.[9]

The same research project revealed much more information on the vironment of the Gower between 34,000 and 24,000 years ago. Today the oat's Hole looks out from its cliff face directly on to the seascape of the istol Channel: very high tides enter the cave, and the waves below nstantly suck and lash at a landscape of weathered limestone boulders, as ough a gorgon had passed and petrified an army on the march. Thirty-four illennia ago, the land below was a frozen tundra, which bloomed during

e warmer climate of the following few millennia into a range of grasses d herbs making up a richer version of the historic steppes of southern ıssia: if the comparison is apt, in the brief summer it would have been a rpet of brilliant flowers, with glow-worms spreading emerald fire across it ter nightfall. Grazing it were stiff-maned wild horses, long-nosed saiga ıtelopes, red deer, reindeer, the extinct species of huge wide-horned wild ttle known as the aurochs, woolly mammoths, and woolly rhinoceroses. ountain hares leaped among the grass, and through it wandered predators at still survive in Europe such as lynxes, red and arctic foxes, wolves and own bears, with other, greater, beasts that have long vanished: cave bears, ve hyenas and cave lions, the largest cats that the world has ever known.

2 The Goat’s Hole, Paviland. The cave shows up as a dark cleft to the right, underneath the ıen-covered crag of Yellow Top.

In this panorama, the Goat’s Hole stood out for humans as somewhere ecial: the Aldhouse-Green project has also confirmed that the quantity of tefacts found in the cave far exceeds that discovered at any other site in :itain or neighbouring parts of Europe from the Early Upper Palaeolithic, e first 20,000 years in which our species is known to have been active in e region. Not even the other caves on that coast of Gower, which are ımerous and include one almost next to the Goat’s Hole, have produced ything like its amount of material from that period. The deposits were ade in repeated visits over a long span of time, covering up to 11,000

ars: among those made later than the burial were bone objects which could ve been blades or stylized female figurines. Stephen Aldhouse-Green and s colleagues suggested that the key to its unusual status may have lain in position under a prominent crag, now named Yellow Top because of the ustard-coloured lichens which cover it and seem to make it glow in nlight. To humans approaching across the plain to the south, it would have ted as a natural beacon signalling the presence of what is now the South elsh massif. More prosaically, the cliff would have made an ideal killing ound over which hunters could have driven herds of animals to their death. ul Pettitt has suggested that for people moving north and west into what s become Britain from adjacent areas of Europe, a large river flowing ong the present line of the English Channel represented a serious barrier. e easiest route round it was along the Atlantic coast of what is now ance, which meant that their first sight of the upland area which has come the island of Britain would have been the modern Gower. Yellow op would therefore have been a landmark of extraordinary importance.[10]

It needs to be emphasized that the earlier excavations at the site, at which any of the most significant finds were made, were extremely badly corded, and that much of the material recovered, such as that collected by e Talbots, has subsequently been lost. This makes anything like a full construction of the burial of the Red Lady impossible. It will never be ear whether the body was whole when buried or already half missing: servers at the time of excavation were indeed not certain whether uckland had found the remains of one person or two. Some of the rviving finds made with it are still enigmatic: the segments of ivory could deed have come from wands, but may have had quite another purpose. The le that the dead man played during life is of course entirely conjectural: ere remains the possibility that his trappings had connotations of political social power rather than of spiritual authority in particular. None the less, e Goat's Hole may be regarded as the most important Early Upper laeolithic site in north-western Europe, and seems to have had sociations, like the Red Lady himself, which were numinous rather than erely practical. This probability, linked to the very long period during hich the Goat's Hole was in use, now makes it a prime candidate for the putation of being the first great sacred place thought to have existed in

hat are now the British Isles and the adjacent parts of Europe's mainland. s growing significance has as yet made little difference to it as a physical tity. The cave itself is effectively now a shell, completely dug out, and its sition has not become any more accessible since Buckland described it as ltogether invisible from the landside, and … accessible only at low water, cept by dangerous climbing along the face of a nearly precipitous cliff'.[11] many ways, its wild and lonely situation enhances its dignity, in contrast sites more open to tourism.

The second outstanding site is Creswell Crags, a gorge just over half a ile long upon the border between the counties of Derbyshire and ottinghamshire. Buckland made cave-digging, in search of human ehistory, an enthusiasm among British scholars, and the caves of the reswell gorge were emptied in a series of campaigns between the 1870s d 1920s. Large quantities of animal bones and flint tools were discovered, d also, most exciting, the only figurative pieces of Palaeolithic mobile art t uncovered in Britain, to compare with the large amount found on ontinental sites. Two in particular drew attention, on segments of animal bone. The first was the front half of a horse's body, covered and preceded a series of vertical lines, the second an upright shape interpreted by the scoverer as 'a masked human figure in the act of dancing a ceremonial nce'.[12] As humans are relatively rare in Palaeolithic paintings and rvings, this made the discovery all the more important, especially as it emed to have a connotation of ritual. In 2003 the site became the focus of major research project based in the universities of Sheffield and Hull and d by Paul Pettitt and Paul Bahn, which immediately achieved spectacular ccess by revealing the existence of the very first Palaeolithic pictures ever und on the walls of British caves.[13] They had been there all the time, rved on the interiors but unnoticed by scholarship, partly because they are sible only from certain angles and partly because they are obscured by ctorian graffiti. Britain had been presumed to possess none of the lebrated Old Stone Age pictures with which French and Spanish caves are corated: suddenly it had proved to contain fine examples.

The same project revealed much about the environment in which the pictions were made. Around 20,000 BC a new Ice Age began, rendering

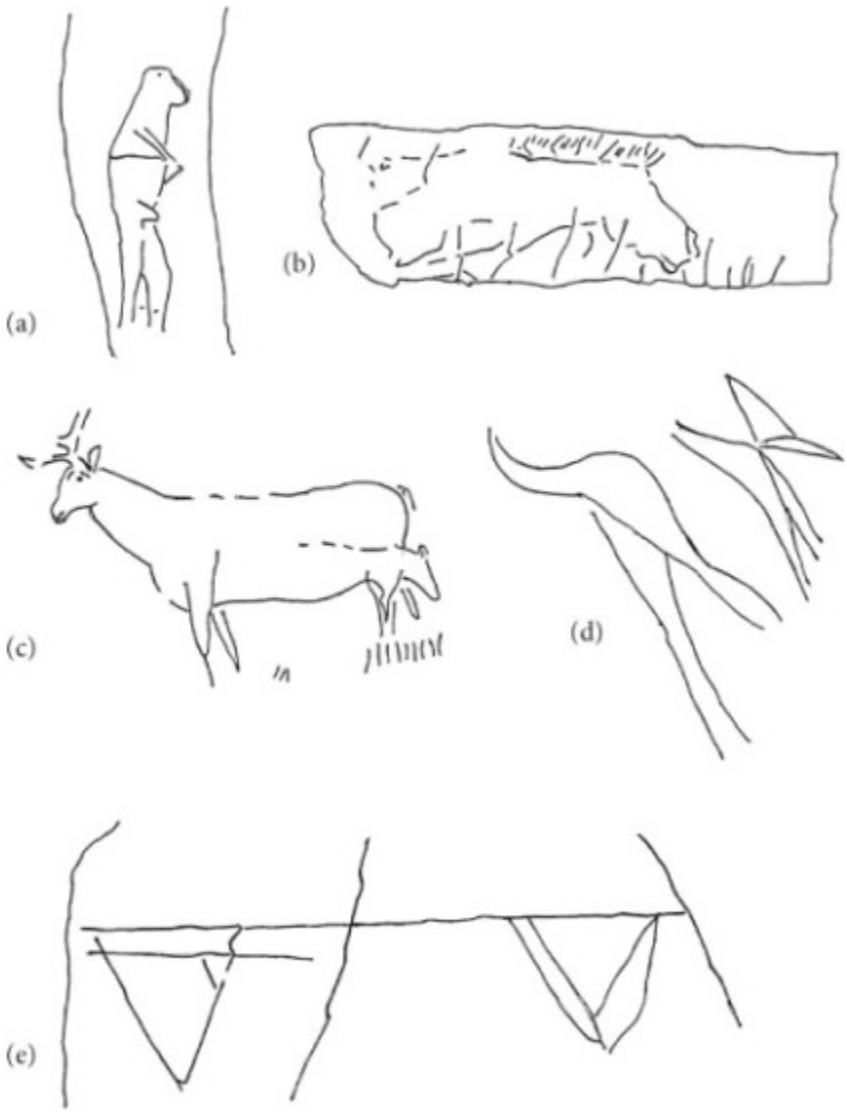
e land mass which became Britain too cold for human habitation for over ve thousand years. Dates from the Creswell caves range between 13,700 d 10,600 BC, a period when the climate had warmed again to a point at hich temperatures were similar to those of today. The vegetation, however, d not caught up with the change, so that the region still consisted of open asslands with spruce, birch, pine and juniper growing in sheltered places. ll of the animals that had thronged the region during the last warm period d returned, except the bison, rhinoceros, hyena and lion, making the new nting grounds safer places for humans than the old, while still abundant ith game. The gorge was occupied only in spring and early summer, when formed an ideal migration route for reindeer, and the caves there were ostly used for the processing of meat. Significantly, that called Church ole, which contained most of the carvings, was the only one not employed r such mundane purposes: facing north, which made it colder and so less ractive for such work, it seems to have been turned instead into a sort of rine. The choice of subjects is standard for the art of the time, animals edominating – especially deer, horses and bison – with a set of more igmatic shapes over which modern observers argue. Surfaces were lected with care, just one wall of Church Hole being used although both ere suitable. One picture was so deep inside that artificial light must have en needed to create it, and it could have been seen by only a single person a time, lying on one side and looking up.

The same research project, however, met with difficulties as well as ccesses. If it brought cave depictions dramatically into the record, it also emed to cast doubt on the engraved bones from Creswell. It revealed, ore comprehensively than before, that ever since the discovery of the rving of the horse had been announced, accusations had been made that it d been planted by one of the excavators. It certainly seems to be a genuine laeolithic artefact, but appears different in colour and form from the other nds in the caves; and the matter remains unresolved and perhaps insoluble. he dancing masked man has also been re-examined, and there is now no finite evidence that the figure was either dancing or a man: it could, for ample, be a bear. Other pieces of stone found in the 1920s, in which the scoverer had claimed to find etchings of animals, may just have natural arkings. Nor is there agreement on the actual number of carvings on the

alls of Church Hole, for the same reason, that natural cracks are not easily stinguished now from deliberate etchings: earlier estimates reaching over o hundred have now been reduced to just twenty-five absolutely certain ages. Interpretation of those is also sometimes controversial. Some consist a triangle with a vertical line through it, a symbol common on the ontinent, which may represent the female sexual organs and thus be a tent symbol either of human fertility and eroticism or of a goddess. On the her hand, that image may represent an animal footprint instead, or mething altogether different from both. Swaying, intertwined lines, also th Continental parallels, might be the shapes of dancing, naked women, rhaps indicating some springtime fertility cult; but they might as easily be e necks of birds. The Creswell cave pictures remain, for reasons that at esent elude everybody, the only body of such pictures yet found in Britain, spite an immediate and intensive hunt through other sites. A possible tline of the head and back of a mammoth was found in Gough's Cave, eddar, in 2007, but is regarded by some experts as a natural marking.[14] In 011 the figure of a single reindeer was identified as carved on the wall of a ower cave, not very far from Paviland, and seems to be receiving more neral acceptance: at a dating of 13,000 to 12,000 BC it is the oldest design rock yet found in the British Isles.[15]

The practicalities of conservation at Creswell have also been oblematic. Nobody had expected the new research project to make such amatic discoveries there that the site would be catapulted into a place of obal importance. Its physical condition at the moment of its scholarly evation was one of the worst possible for such promotion: on the boundary two county jurisdictions, with a public road running straight through it d a water filtration plant at the top. There was little room for a visitor ntre, and none of the finds made in the caves previously were held locally, ing divided between the British and the Manchester Museums. As a result a considerable joint effort by the local councils, and a large National ottery grant, several million pounds have been raised to remove the road d the plant, and to construct a large heritage centre at the end of the gorge, om which parties of visitors can be conducted into the site by official ides. At the time of writing, the displays set up at the centre are already pressive, and sensitive to the difficulties of interpretation, outlined above.

The third site has already been mentioned: Gough's Cave, in Cheddar orge which cleaves through the western side of Somerset's Mendip Hills. nlike the other two, it has been one of the nation's major tourist attractions er since Victorian times, because of the natural beauties of its stalactite d stalagmite formations. Ever since then, also, Palaeolithic bones and nts have been found in it. In 1986, the owner, the marquis of Bath, nbarked on a major new programme of redevelopment to enhance its traction to visitors and so its capacity to generate income, and as part of is a team from the British Natural History Museum was called in to nduct further excavations. These were completed by the end of the 1980s, gether with a fresh consideration of the surviving finds made earlier, and e result was to reveal Gough's Cave as having provided the richest single ncentration of objects yet known from the late Palaeolithic in Britain. mong them were about seven thousand flint tools, left there by hunters ho had occupied the gorge seasonally at some points between about 13,800 d 11,400 BC in order to hunt a range of mammals and birds, but especially rses. They used the same kinds of tools as those at Creswell and may deed have been the same people. If so, they seem to have left no quivalent carvings on the cave walls, but instead two particular kinds of posit which have created excitement in recent years: decorated objects and eces of human body.



3 Images from Creswell Crags

(a) ‘Dancing masked man’ found in the 1920s, all details of this interpretation are now in doubt.

(b) Horse’s head found in the 1870s and considered to be a genuine Palaeolithic engraving, but e possibly planted on the site.

(c) Stag, first of the wall-carvings found in 2003. Not everybody is convinced of the existence of engraving of the smaller animal on its right.

(d) Shapes taken by some to be dancing women, and by others to be long-necked birds.

(e) So-called ‘vulva’ figures – female genitalia or animal tracks, or something else altogether.

4 Gough’s Cave, Cheddar Gorge.

The decorated objects were leg bones of hares, ribs of wild cattle, and eces of mammoth ivory marked with straight lines along the edges in oups varying in number from eight to sixteen. Commentators have terpreted these as tallies for keeping count, message sticks, equipment for mes, rulers for measuring, and lunar calendars. Clearly, the seriousness of e purpose varies greatly between these explanations, and with it the views ken of Palaeolithic society: and there is no definitive way of choosing tween them.[16] Four similar objects were found at Kendrick’s Cave, erlooking the resort town of Llandudno in North Wales, which also oduced a horse’s jawbone incised with zigzag lines and nine perforated er or cattle teeth etched with lines at their roots. It is usually assumed that me symbolic meaning was conveyed by these decorations, but it likewise mains elusive. Nor is it even certain that the Welsh horse jaw is laeolithic: it might date from the subsequent Middle Stone Age.[17]

The human remains, dating to between 13,000 and 12,000 BC, consisted bones from at least four adults and a child, found in the 1980s, and from o more adults and a child dug up in the 1920s. They had been stematically defleshed: first dismembered, then skinned, and then the meat t from the bones and the tongue from the mouth.[18] In the cave, they were

ixed together with animal remains, as if treated equally, and so
ımediately and at points ever since, they have been considered as evidence
r cannibal feasts. Other commentators, however, have pointed out that the
terpretation of cannibalism is unproven: the bones were not broken to
tract marrow, or burned or snapped as the animal remains had been. An
ternative explanation for them is that these were individuals who had died
ı migration, and whose bones had been cleaned on the spot so that they
uld easily be transported to a sacred place, Gough's Cave, and interred
ere.[19] In 2011, after further analysis of the bones, it was found that three of
e skulls had been reshaped like drinking vessels, by cleaning, removal of
cial bones and bases, and grinding of broken edges: the oldest such skull-
ps known in the world.[20] It has been noted that, just as human activity in
ıurch Hole seems to have ceased after the pictures were made there, as if it
d now been consecrated to deities or spirits, so occupation of the Cheddar
ve seems to have ended once the dead were placed in it.[21] Fairly
viously, the debate over the significance of the human bones from
ough's Cave has acted as a projection on to them, by modern authors, of
neral attitudes to human nature. Those with a more pessimistic attitude
ve tended to favour cannibalism as an explanation, and those with a more
timistic one to favour a burial rite; while others have tended to keep
tions open. Understanding was increased at the end of the 2000s by
periments which proved that the marks on some of the toe bones and one
the ribs exactly matched those made by human teeth: so the parts
ncerned had been chewed by people, making the explanation of
nnibalism more likely. On the other hand, as said, the skull-cups were not
eaned to provide food but for fashioning into cups. Where examples of this
tivity have been recorded among different peoples in historic times (and it
s always been rare), it has been for two completely different reasons: to
ımiliate dead enemies, who provided the heads which were turned into
ssels, and to honour dead ancestors, from the source of whose wisdom, the
ad, their descendants drank. Either could fit the evidence at Cheddar, and
the latter was true, then we circle around again to the idea of a funeral rite,
which cannibalism may have formed a part. Whatever the exact reason
r the treatment of these particular bones, it should be emphasized that the
ırial of human remains was extremely rare across Europe and the Near

ıst in the later Palaeolithic, just as in the earlier. Most pieces of human eleton found on those sites are fragments apparently used for personal naments, suggesting that burial of bodies was an exceptional procedure served for people who had been unusual in themselves or died in unusual ays.[22]

The division of opinions over Gough's Cave bones provides the context r the public representation of the remains. In 2005 a new visitor centre was ened opposite the cave entrance, dedicated to the Palaeolithic material, hich played up the interpretation of the bones as evidence of cannibalism proven fact and in the most gruesome and sensational fashion. The portunity to suggest that ancient evidence may be interpreted in different ays was firmly rejected. In Torquay Museum, by contrast, reposes a piece human arm bone found in 1866 inside the famous nearby cave of Kent's avern, another notable source of Palaeolithic remains though not hitherto strongly associated with ritual as the other three sites. It has seven cut arks upon it exactly like those upon the Cheddar skeletons, and may deed have been deposited by the same people. The interpretative label refully avoids advocating any one view of the exhibit, citing both the ssibility of a funerary rite and of cannibal activities.[23] Visitors to the useum, however, tend to be fewer than those to Cheddar Gorge and are ainly individuals there specifically to learn about the past, whereas the rector of the Cheddar caves has the challenge of persuading huge numbers people in search of the entertaining and the spectacular to take an interest the ancient finds from the site. This has obviously been met, because the w museum has attracted a million visitors in its first five years, and this s been largely due to its promotion as the only one in Britain to be dicated to cannibalism.[24]

In all three cases, of Paviland, Creswell and Cheddar, the recent scoveries have resulted from a re-examination of sites that were made mous by work in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and largely ipped of archaeological material then. It may be, however, that they will succeeded by investigations of Palaeolithic ritual behaviour in places therto untouched by excavation and so capable of revealing the very finest sults provided by the latest techniques for recovery of data. Recent surveys

the ridge which contains Creswell Crags have revealed more than 160 ves, shelters and fissures with a high archaeological potential.[25] If that is alized, and reproduced in other promising locations across the country, an derstanding of the British Palaeolithic may only now be commencing.

The European Context

It is time now to relate these discoveries in Britain to the wider picture of laeolithic Europe that has been developed over the same period. This is e more important in that there has never been an age since in which Britain as so completely integrated with the major European land mass: not just ysically, but culturally. The lifestyle, artefacts and pictorial designs of the ople who wandered over what would be Britain are precisely those of the arby parts of the Continent, and theories concerning the nature and eaning of them, developed in and for other European nations, are equally plicable to the British context. The people concerned arrived in Europe ready making stone tools of great beauty as well as of utility, variety and ecialization. They were already at the top of the local food chain, bringing wn large grazing animals such as horses and deer, and perhaps mammoths d rhinoceroses, and capable of keeping predators such as wolves and enas away from their carcasses until the work of butchery was complete. e first human beings to arrive in the north-west of the Continent, long fore *Homo sapiens* evolved, left remains of hunting camps where the scarded bones bore the marks of their tools underneath those of the teeth scavenging beasts: the humans had made the kills and then protected em, rather than coming later to bodies abandoned by more effective kinds carnivore. Our own species was more lethal still: Palaeolithic hunters mpeded a total of 10,000 horses over a cliff at Solutré, France. From its st appearance in the Continent, therefore, *Homo sapiens* had the potential reshape its world in a manner possessed by no other animal: when it shed, it could destroy with the power of a forest fire or an earthquake ther than of just another predator. After 20,000 BC Europeans acquired the e of the eyed needle, allowing them to create clothing with several layers, itable for almost any climate, and developed the spear-thrower, greatly creasing the range of their missiles. Before the end of the Palaeolithic they quired bows and arrows. Although meat made up a large part of their diet,

in the case of Arctic peoples today, they also harvested wild plants, with ckle-shaped flints. By the end of the period they had constructed systems exchange which could carry flint up to 250, and shells up to 400, miles: ey had started to trade.[26]

In attempting to discover how they conceived of their place in the natural divine order, scholars have focused in the main on the painted and carved ages that Palaeolithic Europeans left behind them. Interpretation of these ssed through three phases during the twentieth century, each of which flected changing modern concerns with the nature of humanity and with e human past. The first, which dominated in the first two-thirds of the ntury, centred on the undoubted truth that most of the figures carved or inted in Old Stone Age Europe were of animals. It was the great French holar Salomon Reinach, in 1909, who characterized the main purpose of ese as aids to hunting magic: in other words, ceremonies were performed ound the pictures of animals to ensure that they could be successfully acked and killed in real life. A subsidiary theory that accompanied this one as that the images were also associated with fertility magic, rites designed increase the numbers of the beasts concerned and so the supply of food hich they represented. One or both of these ideas was adopted by most of e leading figures in the field until the 1960s, when it became apparent that e animals represented did not usually match the diet of the people who ade the images, as suggested by the bones left on their living sites. Nor do e pictures normally portray animals in the process of being hunted or ught: markings on some images have sometimes been interpreted as traps, ears or arrows, but the cases where these appear are few, and this terpretation of the marks may itself not be accurate. Animals are never own in the act of mating, and rarely as pregnant or with young, so that the planation of fertility magic has no clear justification. Old Stone Age cture-makers, in fact, seem to have been remarkably uninterested in the act sex: there is not one definite representation of human or animal pulation in any of the images which they have left.[27] The twin planations of hunting magic and fertility magic were products of an age eply concerned with science and technology, and predisposed to interpret cient ritual as an attempt to secure the practical benefits eventually oduced by those forces instead.

The second model of explanation was more short-lived, and associated ith another leading scholar, André Leroi-Gourhan, who published between 63 and 1994. It drew its inspiration from the prevailing intellectual ovement of structuralism, which was especially influential in thropology, and its guiding principle from the undoubted truth that laeolithic figures of animals are very often paired: horses with bison, ibex ith cattle, or cattle with mammoths. This organization of imagery is part of broader preoccupation with space, distinctive designs or groups of designs ing associated with particular areas on cave walls. From this Leroi-ourhan developed a theory that the images represented an elaborate system matched feminine and masculine symbols, intended to promote the rtility of both human and animal populations. This had the merit that it emed to explain much of the layout of the figures, and the drawbacks that was completely incapable of proof and seemed to impose a single crude heme upon a wide variety of imagery spanning two score millennia. It also iled to account for the number, posture, shape and rendering of the animal signs.[28]

During the later twentieth century, admiration for scientific and chnological achievement, and faith in the ability of the European mind to pose structure upon, and discern true meaning in, the beliefs of traditional oples, began to be tempered. A growing concern about the materialist eoccupations of the developed world, and a sense of the potential value of e-industrial concepts and customs, led to a new interest in the spirituality indigenous cultures. Largely because of the influence of a Romanian fugee to France and then America, Mircea Eliade, this came to focus on e notion of shamanism, usually broadly defined as apparent contacts with a irit world made by humans in an altered state of consciousness. Eliade mself applied this to the interpretation of Palaeolithic imagery, and found me followers in this enterprise among German scholars in the 1950s and 60s. The idea met with little enthusiasm outside Germany, however, and ore or less slipped from view after 1970.[29] It reappeared dramatically in 88 with the work of two South Africa academics, David Lewis-Williams d Thomas Dowson, which brought two major pieces of new evidence to e support of the idea that shamanic practices formed a ‘significant mponent’ of Palaeolithic rock paintings and carvings. The first was that

e pictures created by the San, the hunter-gatherer peoples of South African ɔmmonly called Bushmen, bore a similarity to those of the European ılaeolithic and were the work of a people who employed shamanism as a ntral part of their spiritual and therapeutic practices. The second was ıined from psychology, and consisted of the discovery that human beings ıtering ‘entoptic’ states (trances or drug-enhanced visions) often see the aterial world disintegrate into a sequence of increasingly abstract forms ch as those found in the Old Stone Age images of Europe. Both authors veloped these ideas further over the following ten years, and Lewis-illiams teamed up with Jean Clottes, a French expert in the Palaeolithic, to m them up in a book for a general readership.[30] The new theory complished two things that those before it had not: it provided a nvincing parallel for the Old Stone Age figures and symbols among ımans whose beliefs and motivations could be studied, and it reintegrated ıdy of the abstract figures of the Palaeolithic with the animal presentations. Almost half of all the imagery left in Europe from the Old one Age is in fact abstract, consisting of about sixty basic motifs, and this rge number of designs had been neglected in comparison with the famous ımal pictures. Indeed, most Palaeolithic images in the world are abstract: ırope is most unusual in the high proportion of ‘realistic’ figures among em.[31]

The new model of explanation accordingly attracted many enthusiastic sponses, which in turn provoked increasingly passionate rejoinders from ecialists who felt that it was being accepted too rapidly and mprehensively. Some in South Africa emphasized that San paintings emselves embodied a range of cultural meanings, of which shamanism as only one; nor was it quite certain that those San groups who had made e images had also practised shamanism. Experts in native Australian rock ctures doubted that these were entoptic, while those in the Central Asian uivalent could not agree upon whether those were a reflection of amanism or of Indo-Iranian religion. Neuroscientists insisted that the odel of stages of trance used by Lewis-Williams and Dowson, with its ecific imagery, was not found in the natural state of the human brain but nerated only by certain hallucinogenic drugs not obtainable in Palaeolithic ırope. It was also pointed out that animal images of the San and

ılaeolithic kind, and abstract designs with allegedly entoptic associations, e also produced by surviving human societies that do not practise what holars define as shamanism. Conversely, living peoples who do place an ıphasis on altered states of consciousness can make designs which include ıne of those associated with entoptic trance by scientists. Visionary periences may be similar, other arguments ran, but take place in particular ltural contexts, so that similar sorts of drawing and painting can have very fferent meanings.[32]

The most attractive feature of the argument made by Lewis-Williams and owson is that it seems to account for certain forms of Palaeolithic imagery tter than any other. Lewis-Williams and Clottes took pains in their book to int out that the range of concepts, subjects and techniques found in the ld Stone Age pictures of France and Spain alone make it 'naïve to hope for ıe complete explanation'.[33] An American anthropologist, Randall White, s suggested that the shamanic theory can account for perhaps 10 per cent Palaeolithic figures, and this has been echoed by Stephen Aldhouse-reen, the project leader of the new study of Paviland.[34] More generally, wever, the shamanism hypothesis has served a useful purpose in ıphasizing the nature of the pictures in caves as images associated most ımmonly with some form of spiritual experience. This would explain why ey are often hidden deep in interiors which can only be reached after much fort, and with a journey using artificial light. It would account for why me were positioned to be viewed by quite large numbers of people and me by only one at a time. It would also explain the careful combination d composition of pictures, creating spaces for the performance of different es or engagement with different sorts of experience. If the cave walls were deed seen as membranes between human and other worlds, then much of e patterning and location of the figures makes sense. They may have given pression to spirit forms thought to exist in the world beyond the embrane, or have been offerings to these beings. The debate over the amanism model has drawn attention to the large number of images which e sketchily produced and hard to reach, suggesting that the act of creating image was more important than the act of viewing it afterwards. It has so concentrated thought on the fact that caves with plenty of images

sonate well, with the implication that singing or chanting was a part of the es conducted in them.

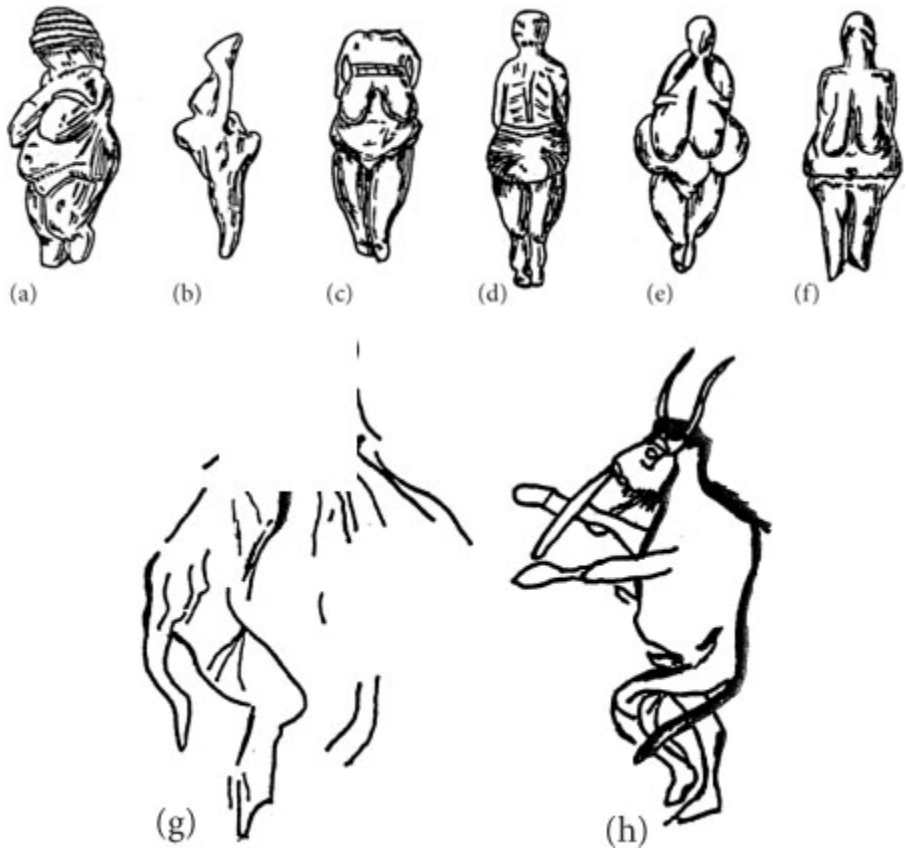
Ultimately, however, the significance of most of the images in the caves, upon mobile objects, must elude us. Randall White has pointed out that search among living tribes who have carried on a hunting and gathering estyle in the Arctic, such as the Aivilik of the Inuit people, has proved that curate interpretation of their painted and carved representations depends a comprehensive understanding of their belief system and environment. the case of the European Palaeolithic, we can reconstruct the latter, but t the former; and there has been no hunter-gatherer people in modern nes that has possessed a culture exactly like those of Old Stone Age rope. The consistency with which similar images, locations and activities ere reproduced there over twenty millennia argues for a very strong mework of beliefs, but one completely lost to us.[35] We can be more or ss certain that people who left so many pictures and shapes on rocks and one, bone, clay or antler objects would have decorated their own bodies, othes, baskets and wooden possessions with many more: but all these are so lost to us. Since the 1990s experts have increasingly argued that grand hemes of explanation are not appropriate for Palaeolithic images, and that searchers should concentrate instead on asking why the making of them ould have been meaningful to certain people at certain times in certain aces; which induces a greater concentration on the setting and experience particular sites.[36] An alternative but complementary approach is to cognize that they may have had multiple and diverse meanings, only some which we may ever understand.[37]

In these discussions, images in human or near-human shape have often en given special prominence and divided according to gender. Among the male representations, particular attention has been paid to a group of about irty-five statuettes, usually relatively small and portable, produced – as far dating evidence for them exists – between 26,000 and 19,000 BC. They e fashioned in clay, ivory or stone, and all are footless, faceless, and holly or mostly nude, with pronounced breasts, buttocks and/or abdomens, ough some seem plump, some pregnant and some to have breasts and ttocks alone emphasized. They are found across Europe, though those

om the western and central regions tend to lack an exact context, and those om Russia are found more often in groups and upon settlement sites, ainst interior walls or in pits. When they first began to be identified, in the neteenth century, they were nicknamed ‘Venuses’ after the nude statues of e Roman goddess of love; and the label has stuck. They have been terpreted as images of goddesses, or of a goddess, or of spirits, as magical jects used in healing, fertility, funeral or contraceptive rites, as marriage kens, and as ideals of female beauty, general symbols of womanhood or hicles for female self-expression.[38] Female, or apparently female, figures e also carved on plaques of stone, or bones, or carved or painted on rock alls, and these representations are found on sites datable down to the end the Palaeolithic. Occasionally these resemble the famous figurines, the st known of which is the ‘Venus of Laussel’, one of three female forms lding objects, carved into a French rock shelter. Another celebrated set of male images is the pair carved upon the entrance to the cave of La adeleine in the Aveyron Valley of central France. Each is large, naked and clining, with the head only partially and sketchily indicated but the pubic angle deeply etched. One has a bison drawn below her, and the other a rse. The Abri du Roc aux Sorciers, the ‘overhanging part of the agicians’ Rock’, also in central France, is etched with the loins, bellies and gs of three naked females standing above a bison, their genitalia again early marked.[39]

Since the European Palaeolithic first began to be studied, it has been vious both that human figures in general are much rarer in its carvings and intings than those of animals, and that among the small minority of human presentations females are more common than males. The iconic masculine ages on which attention has been concentrated are all on cave walls, parently dancing, and either dressed up as animals or part animal emselves. Three of the four most famous are found in a single cavern, ois Frères, the Cave of the Three Brothers, in the French Pyrenees. One s a bison’s head, forelegs and body and human hind legs, and seems to nce and play a musical instrument in the middle of a herd of bison: though may have had no connection with the latter, and the instrument may be a oud of steam from its nose, or the manifestation of a spirit form. A second s the horned head of some similar animal. The third is the single most

mous male figure from the whole of the Palaeolithic, nicknamed ‘the ɔrcerer’ and known generally from the drawing made of it by Henri Breuil, e greatest expert in Palaeolithic cave pictures in the early twentieth ntury. He portrayed it as having the head of a stag, the eyes of an owl or t, a long beard, the body of a horse or deer, a deer’s ears, the legs of a an, the tail of a horse or wolf, animal forepaws, and the genitals of a male line. In the cave of Le Gabillou in the Dordogne is the fourth famous ıage, of a being with a male human body and the head of a bison or bull. :holars have interpreted these beings as different gods, a single god, spirits, onsters, priests, jesters, witch doctors or shamans, or hunters disguised as ımals to deceive their prey.[40]



5 Iconic Palaeolithic images: Venuses and bison-men.

(a) The ‘Venus of Willendorf’, limestone figurine from Austria

(b) Stone ‘Venus’ figurine from Italy

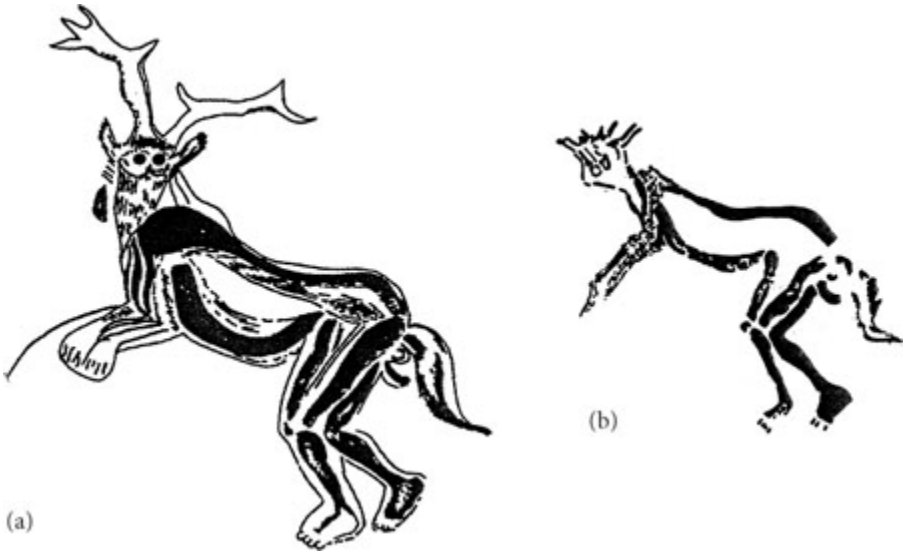
(c) and (d) Ivory figurines from Russia

(e) The ‘Venus of Lespugue’, ivory figurine from France

(f) Baked clay figurine from Czech Republic

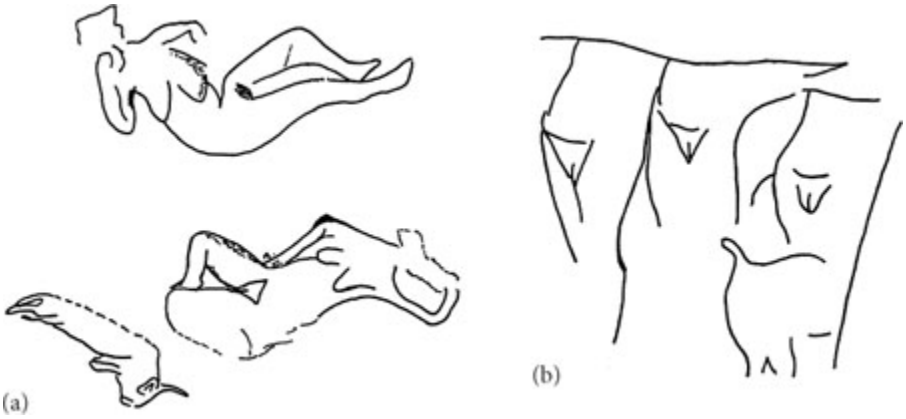
(g) Bison-man from Le Gabillou cave, France

(h) Bison-man from Trois Frères cave, France



6 Iconic Palaeolithic images: The ‘Sorcerer’ of Trois Frères.

The illustration (a) is the famous one by the Abbé Breuil (redrawn after R. Bégouën and H. euil), while (b) shows the features visible from the floor of the cave. The contrast could be regarded ıply as one between painted and carved features, the latter being visible only at close quarters and to the artist: but there seems to be no general agreement upon exactly how many of the body parts ıwn by Breuil are actually present.



7 Iconic Palaeolithic images: carvings of females.

(a) Reclining figures from the cave of La Madeleine.

(b) The three from L'Abris du Roc aux Sorciers, who were giantesses if the bison below was ociated with them: but was it?

Since the 1990s, it has become increasingly obvious that the emphasis on ese celebrated images may be misleading, and that the human form in laeolithic images needs to be approached from other perspectives. In part is shift has been propelled by the first systematic attempts to catalogue the presentations of human-like figures, which have brought a realization of e impossibility of such a task. One problem in attempting it has already en stressed: the difficulty of distinguishing very ancient carvings from tural lines in a rock or bone. This has some interesting implications for the anner in which the human-made images were produced. To take one of the ost famous examples, the 'Sorcerer' of Trois Frères is partly painted and rtly carved, and the carved portions are invisible from the cave floor, the sition from which anybody entering the cave would be likely to view it. her people would therefore effectively be seeing a different image from at represented by the person who made it; a point which drives home the essage that Palaeolithic caves cannot be equated to modern art galleries d that the act of making a picture may have been the really important rite sociated with it. More worrying is that there seems to be no general reement on how many of the features of the figure shown in the famous awing by the Abbé Breuil are actually present in the original.[41] Another fference between Palaeolithic compositions and what Europeans have storically called art is superimposition: very often different pictures were ade one on top of another until it is now both very hard to tell which line longs to which figure and how much particular images in the whole mix ere ever related to each other. Even when superimposition did not take ace, the portrait is rarely a clear and simple one. Ann Sieveking examined gravings upon pieces of stone, bone and antler made in Europe between ,000 and 8,000 BC, and found that most of the human or animal figures d additional lines added to them, often very numerous. The significance of ese is unknown: to the modern eye they have no obvious purpose.[42]

Where there is absolute confidence in the shape and form of what is ing represented, complete disagreement can remain as to the meaning. A

assic case here would be that of the triangular designs at Creswell entioned above, common among Palaeolithic rock images, which were terpreted by Breuil as symbols of female genitalia and by others – most otably of late, Steven Mithen – as animal footprints, while yet others mply declare them impossible to interpret. The same sort of basic shape curs in many different forms, square, round, broken and oval. If they were deed vulvae, then the number of references to the human female form on laeolithic sites would be greatly multiplied; but nobody can be sure.[43] nother such case arising at Creswell, also mentioned above, is the mpossibility of deciding whether certain wavy figures are dancing women waterbirds: similar shapes are known from different regions of the ontinent, and the same argument takes place over them in each location.[44] ne researcher into native Australian rock paintings, N. W. G. Mackintosh, entified twenty-two different animal images in them. In this case, however, was later able to ask a native belonging to the culture that made the ctures what they meant, and discovered that he had been wrong about teen of the animals and only partly right about the rest.[45]

What is more significant is the growing realization that while much of is kind of ambiguity is a product of our own ignorance, much is also herent in the imagery. Modern Western culture has long drawn a sharp stinction between human and animal, and female and male but, in pictures least, the Palaeolithic did not. Furthermore, modern Westerners like to assify things by type, in a way that more traditional peoples do not: Jean ottes has pointed out that those who have hunted the bison in recent nturies have not viewed it as a single category of animal but as one with any attributes.[46] This way of looking at the world made it easier for laeolithic people to blur the boundaries between species as well as making e nature of a species itself multi-faceted: fantastic beasts, which mix the ributes of actual animals, are well represented in their imagery. The cave Trois Frères alone has deer-birds, bear-wolves and bear-bison, so it is rdly surprising that it should also have beast-men (if indeed the bison- aded human shape is in fact male).[47] There now seems to be a consensus nong experts that no effective criteria exist for distinguishing human and imal figures in Palaeolithic imagery.[48] Similarly, the traditional scholarly bit of dividing the apparently human figures of the period into female and

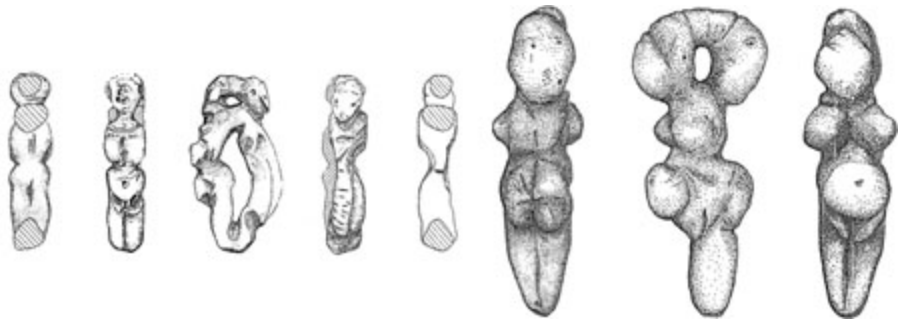
ale misses the point that such a division was not seemingly important to e people who fashioned them. Ann Sieveking and Rosemary Powers have ade surveys of these figures, the former on the engraved plaquettes and the ter in all media. Their findings agree that apparently female forms are ore numerous than apparent males, but that the majority cannot be signed to either sex. Most are slim, and only about half of the female amples possess the accentuated breasts, hips or stomachs of the enuses'.[49] Human figures are usually very stylized, lacking hands and feet d with faces hardly indicated; most are incomplete.[50]

It is helpful in this context to take another look at the 'Venus' figurines emselves. Doubt hangs over the number that can be accepted as authentic eces of Palaeolithic craft, as opposed to the products of modern forgers: me authorities would consider that only those from central and eastern rope, which have precise find-spots, should be regarded as certainly ehistoric.[51] At the opening of the twenty-first century, a fresh look was ken at those with an apparent secure context by three scholars who pointed t that the obviously female figurines had been overemphasized at the pense of others from the same sites. Taken together, the whole collection om each site was remarkable for its number of hermaphrodites, or beings t fully human or clearly part-animal. They seemed to illustrate not only fferent types of being but relations between beings; a world in which the man form, or at least the female one, could shift from one kind of reality another.[52] At Dolní Vêstonice in the Czech Republic, a total of fifteen ay human figurines were found, of which eight were female, two male and ve of neutral gender, among a much larger number of clay animals. One of e female statuettes was a classic example of the 'Venus' kind. The gurines, human and animal, had been deliberately blown to pieces by being aced wet in a hearth or kiln, and the 'Venus' one appeared to have been abbed: it was apparently for this act of ritual destruction that all had been ade.[53] Once again, the figures seem to be associated with transformation, ther than with static identities. Now that modern Western culture is itself arting to abandon rigid gender divisions and polarities, to challenge its stomary sharp distinction between animal and human, and to admit to uidity in the making and remaking of individual identity, it is beginning to rceive the same patterns in the creations of the Palaeolithic.

A few further observations can be made. The first is the great importance at the people of the period attached, in ritual contexts, to the colour red. It of course, that of the vital fluid of life, which is also, in menstruation, the gn of human fertility. The costume of the Red Lady has already been ted, and other burials from the European Old Stone Age were given the me hue, either by sprinkling or painting with red ochre or likewise by ing interred in red clothing. Some figurines were coated in that colour, and features commonly in paintings on rocks. The attribution of a special gnificance to it is a human trait that long predates our species, as red gments are found on sites used by human-like beings in Africa a million ars ago, and in Neanderthal burials: in this as in other respects *Homo piens* greatly multiplied and intensified older behavioural patterns. Red hre certainly had several practical virtues which may have reinforced, or times supplanted a ritual one, including treating and colouring animal ins, decorating the human body, cleaning wounds, repelling insects, otecting skin against sunburn or frostbite, and disguising bodily odours, th of the living and of decomposing corpses. How far the presence of the lour in apparently ritual contexts is the result of a projection of these tributes, and how much it relates to the deeper, vital associations entioned above, is probably impossible to tell, and almost certainly varied om case to case.[54]

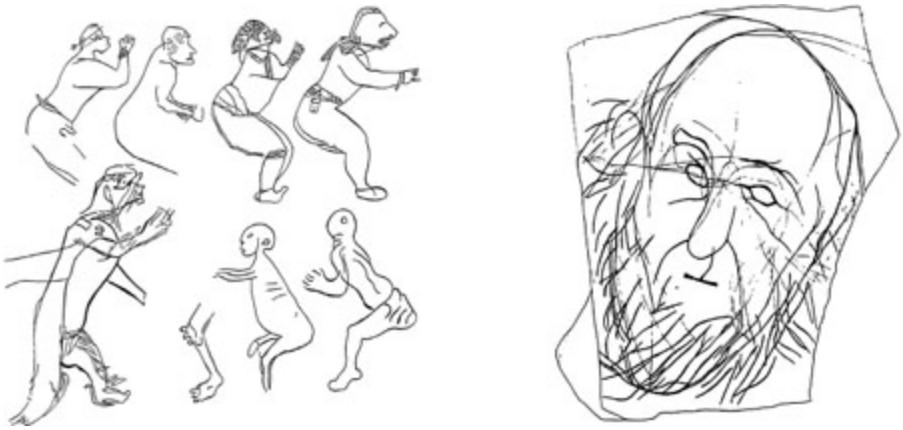
8 Less familiar Palaeolithic images: abstract forms

No one theory of interpretation has as yet comprehended all of the symbols shown here, which m less than a third of the stock abstract repertoire of Palaeolithic Europeans.



9 Less familiar Palaeolithic images: figurines

Carved figures found at the Balzi Rossi caves in Italy with a ‘Venus’ statuette. Neglected in nparison to the ‘Venus’, they seem to show the human body, perhaps specifically the female body, dergoing a series of transformations. Redrawn after M. Mussi *et al.*

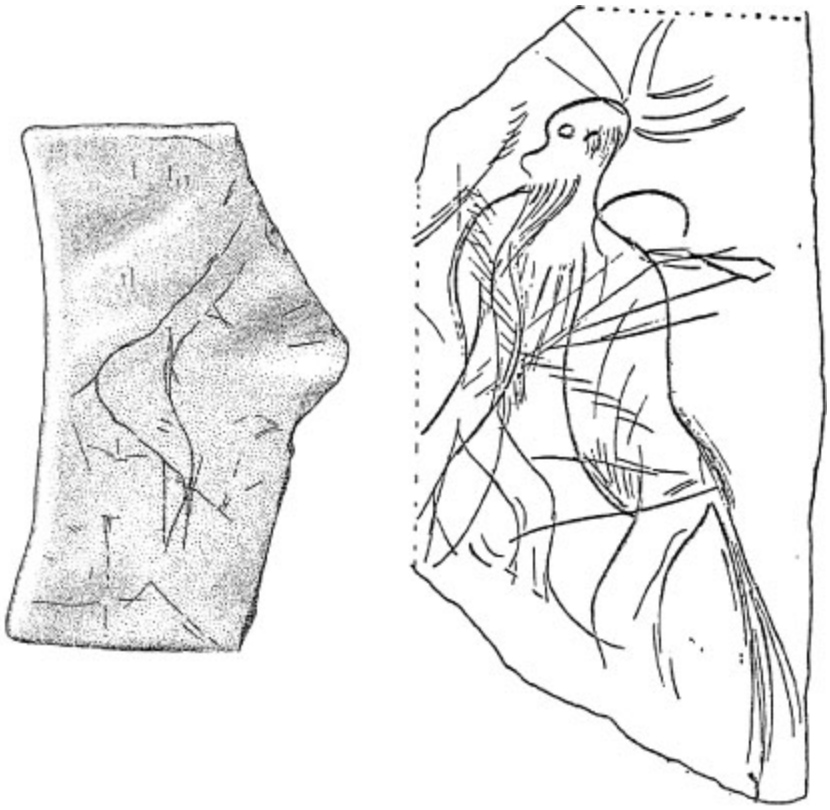


10 Less familiar Palaeolithic images: fantasy and reality?

The eight forms on the left, are typical representations of human or quasi-human figures made in Palaeolithic – rarely complete, rarely more than sketches, and moving easily between human and mal shapes. On the right, engraved on a stone plaque in France, and redrawn here after J. Airvaux l L. Pradel, a wholly realistic human face, showing that it was quite possible to produce both types he same time.

11 Less familiar Palaeolithic images: the problem of the extra lines

Limestone block from France with an engraving of two apparently male figures. It is :ompanied by a large number of the mysterious, and seemingly superfluous, swirling additional es so common in Old Stone Age pictures. Redrawn after L. Pales.



12 Less familiar Palaeolithic images: female and male?

The figure on the left, carved on the bottom of a stone lamp found in France, is typical of the ıpes usually interpreted as human or humanoid females: but were they? On the right, also French, a ıist plaque. This may show a bearded man wearing a plumed headdress and horse's tail. He could, wever, also be a god, or a beast-man, while the usual superimposition of lines means that plumes, l and beard could all actually belong to another figure. Redrawn after H. Breuil.

There may yet be a way of getting inside the Palaeolithic religious indset, which has hitherto not really been systematically attempted: to ımpare the cosmologies and mythologies of native peoples in Siberia and e Americas, recorded as close to first contact with Europeans as possible. these show certain abiding common features, among ethnic groups too far ɔm the straits dividing the continents for direct contact and diffusion of eas to be a likely explanation, then it is possible that we are looking at ıncepts carried from the Old World to the New during the great human igrations of the Old Stone Age. So far only a little pioneering work has en done in this area.[55] Anthropology has been of help in establishing that ınter-gatherers in general make no firm distinctions between humans and

her animals, give great importance to animal spirits and spirits that control imals, and treat the making of pictures as a revelation of the workings of ture, an extension of ecology and subsistence rather than an activity parate from lived experience.[56] All this is of relevance in providing a ntext for the mindset of Palaeolithic Europeans, even if it cannot explain e specific images and forms which they have left behind.

The Mesolithic

Until quite recently, the end of the last Ice Age was portrayed as a nooth and gradual process, in which temperatures, vegetation and sea vels all rose together millennium by millennium. Towards the end of the entieth century, new scientific processes – the analysis of pollen and that ice samples extracted from the polar ice sheets – provided better evidence gainst which to test this supposition. In addition, moreover, a powerful notional impetus to do so was provided by the recognition of increasingly amatic and disturbing climate change in the present, creating a new terest in it during the past. The result was a cascade of information which vealed how erratic and disruptive a process the warming of Europe had en. Between 13,000 and 12,500 BC, summer temperatures in north-western rope doubled, to a point that was, as has been said, similar to or slightly gher than they are today. By 12,000, tree cover was advancing into rthern Europe at the rate of about a mile per year, and birch forest covered uch of what was to be England. Around 11,000, temperatures fell again, most halving in perhaps as little as fifty years, so that the trees died and ctic conditions returned to what is now Britain for more than a illennium. From about 9500 the warming resumed, and by 8000 the trees d begun to return: within two thousand years they had covered much of hat would be Britain in forests of oak, lime, hazel, elm and alder, though eas of open grassland survived. Sea levels also rose as the ice caps melted, eland breaking away in about 7500 BC. Between then and 6200 the reading Atlantic finally turned Britain into an island and drowned Doggerland', which had perhaps been the richest hunting ground in Europe. his influx of cold water brought down temperatures again, to those of esent-day southern Scandinavia, for about four centuries. After that, the

arming resumed until around 4000 BC Britain enjoyed something like a odern north Mediterranean climate.[57]

Inevitably, such a colossal alteration in environment meant an equivalent ange in human lifestyles, great enough for archaeologists to label the ming of forests to north-western Europe as the opening of a new era of ehistory: the five millennia which have been generally known since the 30s as the Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age. The vast herds of grazing imals vanished with the steppes, and mammoth, bison, reindeer and horse came extinct in Britain. Red and roe deer, wild cattle, elk and wild boar her adapted to the woodlands or came north with them, but were harder to e among the trees than the wildlife of the plains had been. Lynxes, bears, d foxes and wolves survived as competing predators. Plant food – nuts, uit, fungi, seeds, seaweeds, cresses and tubers – became much more portant to diet, and the spreading forests and waters meant that much man occupation was relocated to the margins of lakes, rivers and the sea. is in turn made fish and shellfish a further major source of food, along th waterfowl. People accordingly laid a new emphasis on woodworking ols, archery and artefacts made of wood and plant fibres, domesticated the g and adapted flint-working to create smaller blades. By the seventh illennium BC they seem to have acquired the ability to burn areas of forest order to create clearings in which game animals could graze. By the fifth, me communities in what is now central southern England may have ttled down, ceasing to move around even seasonally. The elk and lynx parently disappeared from Britain by 4000 BC, and may have been hunted extinction. The new climate and terrain seemingly suited humans well ough, because they supported a much larger population: one estimate is at the inhabitants of Britain multiplied by a number between three and five tween 9000 and 5000 BC, to somewhere between two and a half and five d a half thousand. All the technological and cultural innovations were velopments of existing Palaeolithic skills and practices rather than amatic breaks with the past.[58]

In pictorial expression, however, the break was dramatic: the Palaeolithic thusiasm for carving and painting figures, which had flourished for 20,000 ars, completely disappeared. Indeed, until the 1990s the British Mesolithic as commonly treated as almost barren of evidence for ritual behaviour. The

ıgle site left from it of which the world had heard was Star Carr, in eastern ɔrkshire, excavated by Grahame Clark between 1949 and 1951. It had been lakeside hunting camp during two different periods in the early ninth illennium, for the pursuit of forest animals and waterfowl, and particular terest was generated by the discovery here of twenty-one skull frontlets of d deer with antlers attached. They had been adapted to be worn on human ads, masking the face, and Clark proposed that they had been the costume priests or shamans: there is a famous seventeenth-century drawing of a berian shaman wearing just such a headdress. On the other hand, he lmitted that they could also have been disguises used by hunters of the er; and those two possibilities have been cited, without resolution, ever ıce.[59]

From the 1990s, new evidence began to be assembled, and old data assessed, for ceremonial activities. It began to be appreciated that the ılaeolithic custom of cave burial had been continued and amplified during e British Mesolithic, between the years 9000 and 5000 BC, and indeed at me of the same sites: Gough's Cave was reused, as were other Mendip verns which had yielded Old Stone Age material such as Aveline's Hole d Badger's Hole, and also Kent's Cavern in Devon. The body found in ɔugh's Cave, nicknamed Cheddar Man, achieved celebrity in the 1990s hen DNA from him was found to match that of two pupils and a teacher in e local school, proving the length of some British bloodlines; but he was ıg up so long ago and so carelessly that there is no absolute certainty that was deliberately buried. Aveline's Hole, in a smaller gorge on the ɔposite side of the Mendip Hills, seems to have been a cemetery, for at ast fifty bodies were found there in 1797, sealed by calcium dripping from e limestone ceiling and walls. Most were removed without being properly corded, but at least thirty-one more were excavated there between 1914 d 1924, some with grave goods such as seashells, animal teeth and fossils. ıese might have been decorations for clothing, as they were drilled or ɔtched for fastenings, and further continuity with the Old Stone Age was ovided by a deer bone with marks notched upon the edge, like those at ɔugh's Cave, and red staining on a few skeletons. In 2003 two rows of ıgraved diagonal crosses were found in the cave, which were thought

ssibly to be Mesolithic, and so a continuation of the older tradition of stract carvings.

The Aveline's Hole burials have now been dated to between 8400 and 00 BC, making them the largest assemblage of Mesolithic human remains Britain and one of the most important in Europe; and, indeed, Britain's dest cemetery. Further analyses of the finds show that the people ncerned had hunted red deer, wild boar, wolf, lynx and bear, amid a ndscape of birch and pine woodland with open stretches of grass.[60] The arkings, however, cannot be dated and could well be overlapping V-signs, notif well known from the Tudor and Stuart periods and believed to give otective power, and known from other Mendip caves: more will be heard it later in this book. The problem with this interpretation is that there is no idence that the cave was open between the Middle Stone Age and the ghteenth century; but here we start to travel in circles, because if the marks e of early modern style, then this in itself would be possible evidence that ople had entered the cavern at that time. In 2005, in another of the many verns of Cheddar Gorge, the Long Hole, more putative Mesolithic art was entified consisting of three engraved rectilinear designs, all apparently ry old. They, might, however, be of any date before the last few hundred ars, and the site has yielded no Middle Stone Age finds.[61] Seven Welsh ves have produced Mesolithic remains, and at Rhuddlan in north-east ales six pebbles were found incised with lines making patterns that may be ometric (or may be random); another echo of the past, recalling the arked bone from Kendrick's Cave. Twelve of the fourteen sites from which esolithic human bones have been recovered in Britain are caves, all but e of which had been used in the Old Stone Age: they were apparently still garded as places of natural power and ancestral mythology. It is possible at the newly powerful and intrusive medium of water was also used for rial at this time: human bones from the period have been found in a rmer watercourse in the Trent Valley and in Norfolk's River Yare, but they em to be the only securely dated example of their kind.[62]

Further interest has recently been provoked by the analysis of mounds of od waste – middens – found on the Scottish mainland and islands. They uld be huge: one at Morton, in Fife, was made up of 10,000 shells. Three

ı the island of Oronsay, in the Hebrides, were several yards or metres high ıd contained human bones, especially from the hands and feet. One ırpose of the mounds may have been to lay out dead bodies so that they ıuld be picked clean by animals before burial: it is notable that most of the eletons found in the caves were disarticulated and incomplete. Chantal ɔnneller has proposed that this may have been one aspect of living in a ınting society: just as humans cut up animals for food, so after death ımans themselves were left to wildlife to be taken apart in turn. In one nse, the middens were simply rubbish dumps, but they were carefully aced out of reach of storms and tides and used over many seasons. As ch, they may have been used to mark territory, or at least a sense of group ntinuity and belonging in the landscape, and so functioned, in effect, as onuments.[63] If so, they were not the only monumental structures from the riod. In 1966 a new visitors' car park was built next to Stonehenge, and in e process three large holes were discovered in an irregular line, which had ld pinewood posts two and a half feet (0.6 to 0.8 metres) thick. In 1988–9 e car park was extended, and a large pit, dug by humans, found near the ɔst holes. In the 1990s all of these were securely dated to between 8500 d 7500 BC. If they were all erected at once, the posts may have been tended to line up with a large tree, perhaps regarded as sacred, of which e root-pit remains; it is also likely that the place was made special in ıman eyes by the presence of lines of grooves dug in the chalk rock by aciers during a preceding Ice Age, aligned on the midsummer sunrise. The tural tendency has been to conclude that the posts were equivalents to ative American totem poles, and probably carved and painted in the same anner: they have no apparent practical function. A very similar pair of ɔsts, from the earlier eighth millennium, stood at another spectacular eolithic site, the enclosure at Hambledon Hill in Dorset: like those at onehenge, they commanded a wide view and would have been visible ɔm some distance. It is highly significant that the presence of these great ɔsts was only detected because they were on the sites of impressive later onuments, raising the question of how many more are as yet ıdiscovered.[64]

In recent years pits containing Mesolithic deposits have been identified ɔ and down Britain, from Dorset to northern Scotland. Most impressive are

e sixteen in Warren Field at Crathes, up the Dee Valley from Aberdeen. ıey were dug in an irregular line in two phases between about 8120 and 590 BC, and contained charcoal-rich material, perhaps left by people fishing r salmon and trout in the Dee. At Down Farm on the Cranborne Chase alklands of Dorset, now home of the farmer archaeologist Martin Green, a ep natural hollow was opened in the fifth millennium and given deposits animal bones for centuries after.[65] As Richard Chatterton has pointed out, hough the contents of Mesolithic pits can look like mere refuse, it would ve been far easier to dispose of that by dumping it in the forest. The ening of pits and hollows not only required more effort but was a rposeful, ritualized act suggesting greater respect for the material buried d also associations with fertilization and regeneration.[66] Moreover, an creasing number of Mesolithic wooden structures has been identified in otland, the Isle of Man and northern England. Some were substantial, that Howick in the Scottish Borders consisting of a roughly circular undation cut into the ground about 19.7 feet (6 metres) across, with timber sts erected inside. It was first made around 7800 BC and then rebuilt or ended repeatedly for up to two hundred years. All may have been dwelling aces – Britain's earliest houses – but they may have been ceremonial ildings as well or instead: another form of monument.[67] On the whole, the ve burials tend to come from earlier in the Mesolithic, and the pits, posts d buildings from later, but there is a large overlap between them.

Joshua Pollard and Richard Chatterton have gone further, to suggest that cumulations of Mesolithic deposits in watery places, which had hitherto en interpreted as mere disposal of rubbish, had in fact been ritually made. ıey point in particular to accumulations of animal bones put into water at rious sites across England and Wales; above all in the lake at Star Carr, here they were accompanied by 191 barbed antler points, made as hunting eapons and many unbroken. The animals, they suggested, had been put to the lake after butchery, as a sign of respect to protect their bodies from avengers and perhaps as a rite of regeneration. The points, by the same gic, would have been part of this ceremony of renewal, and perhaps in dition were subject to a prohibition against their further use once they had ken life.[68] This idea was developed into a proposal that the wooden atform on the lakeside, which had hitherto been regarded as a jetty, might

ve been a walkway for putting offerings into the water.[69] As noted, until 90 it seemed that there was almost no evidence for ritual activity in the itish Mesolithic: suddenly vestiges of such activity seemed to be erywhere, simply because archaeologists were now looking for it enuously. Not everybody, however, was prepared to go that far: in 2009 ul Mellars objected that the items recovered from the lake could indeed ve been casually discarded there.[70] Likewise, in 2007 Graeme Warren ondered whether the importance of the Scottish middens might have been erstated, as few of them are large and we do not know how they would ve looked in the prehistoric landscape; and if human bone was found in em, so it has been on Mesolithic sites in general.[71]

The people of the period must have had a vivid repertoire of myth and ligious belief connected to their landscape and its past. As Vicki ummings has suggested, inherited stories almost certainly referred to, and plained in mythological terms, the dramatic changes in terrain at the end the Ice Age, while the forests among which people dwelt must have made es prominent beings in their spirituality.[72] Spirits of water would esumably also have been important to them. It can be said too that by the d of the Mesolithic humans in Britain were still engaging with their vironment in such a manner as to leave the smallest possible lasting idence of their presence in it. None the less, they had already made a mber of major conceptual innovations, in keeping with our species's ique capacity for symbolic action, of which religious activity is one mension. Immediately after arriving in what was to be Britain, they had gun to hold funeral ceremonies for their dead and to designate certain tural places as spiritually numinous – consecrated – and so to be set apart om everyday activities and dedicated to ritual. In some of these they had ft a permanent sign of those rites, in the form of carved figures and designs at could be viewed ever after by any person capable of recognizing them. uring the Mesolithic they had started to impose their own structures on the ndscape in general, in the form of buildings, posts and mounds, which ould leave a testimonial to their presence even when the builders had andered on or died out. The wooden structures would decay away, but the ounds remain as permanent features. All the ceremonial activities and

onuments that would follow during the next six millennia were already esent in embryo, even though their range and scale were as yet modest.

2

THE EARLIER NEOLITHIC

A CRAZE FOR MONUMENTS

DURING THE CENTURIES around 4000 BC, Britain passed into the New one Age, or Neolithic. As a concept, this is a Victorian creation. The basic odern division of European prehistory, based on the nature of tools, was orked out in Denmark in the early nineteenth century, as one of successive one, Bronze and Iron Ages. It was Sir John Lubbock, one of the founders the modern British discipline of archaeology, who divided the Stone Age r the first time, into Old and New, in 1865 (the Middle Stone Age did not ish in between for another seventy years).[1] The idea of a Neolithic has sted because it makes such good sense, describing as it does the adoption a package of new activities which between them radically changed human e. By the 1950s this was agreed to consist of the cultivation and harvesting crops (types of wheat, barley and pulses); the keeping of livestock (cattle, gs and sheep); the making of pottery; the production of polished stone ols; deep mining; and the building of large structures of earth, wood and one. All of these developments first appeared in the Near East, and spread owly westwards across Europe. Together, they meant that human beings ere no longer only living upon and off the land, but reshaping and developing it as well: they marked the shift from a hunting and gathering estyle to a farming one. They also, unsurprisingly, produced some radical anges in ritual behaviour.

Archaeologists at present divide the period in two different ways. One is to an Early (4000–3300 BC), Middle (3300–2900 BC) and Late (2900–2400 C) Neolithic, the other more simply into Early (4000–3000 BC) and Late 000–2200 BC).[2] The proponents of each seem to regard it as normative. oth have relevance to the subject of this book, but the second a greater one, e reasons for which should become obvious in the course of the next two apters.

The Coming of the Neolithic

No period of British history or prehistory has been so dramatically configured than the New Stone Age. In the mid twentieth century it was ought to have lasted for a few hundred years, and to have commenced after lly developed urban civilizations had arisen in Egypt and Mesopotamia, legating Britain to the status of a barbarous frontier. During the 1970s, ıprovements in dating techniques (based on the analysis of radioactive rbon in ancient deposits) revealed that it lasted about two thousand years, d that its monuments rank among the most impressive achievements of ımanity at that period. The same developments in dating have shown that e spread of the Neolithic lifestyle across the European Continent was a ocess of relatively brief and rapid spurts of expansion, followed by lengthy riods of consolidation. In the Near East this lifestyle had been formed by ound 9000 BC, but it took over three millennia to reach the centre of ırope. Between 5500 and 5100 BC it spread from the Balkans to what is w eastern France, but there it stuck for almost a thousand years, before pearing all over western France, the British Isles and the Baltic region in e couple of centuries on either side of 4000 BC.[3] Furthermore, it has cently been agreed that there was in fact no homogeneous Neolithic ackage' which people adopted in its entirety.[4] Rather, different mmunities selectively adopted aspects of the new lifestyle which appealed ost to them, resulting in a range of different cultural experiences. Across e Continent, this produced spectacular variations: for example, on the stern extremity of Europe, between the Carpathian Mountains and the ver Dnieper, towns appeared, with populations of up to 10,000 people and d-out streets, while between Hungary and France villages of small family uses were common; but neither form of settlement was found in the north-est of Europe, including Britain.[5]

Smaller, but still very significant, differences were found within the itish archipelago itself. The 'Celtic Tiger' boom in the Irish economy in e years around AD 2000 resulted in a large amount of developer-led cavation, which produced a sudden new flood of information on the olithic of Ireland. It was revealed to have been characterized, from the ginning, by widespread building of houses, cultivation of cereal crops and

aking of fields. The same pattern seems true of the Western and Northern les of Scotland. By contrast, across most of Britain there is comparatively tle evidence of either dwellings or cereals, and instead the economy seems have come to depend mainly on herding, especially of cattle, by people ith a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life. The amount of grain found is small that it has been suggested that consumption of it was reserved for remonial occasions; it may even have been brewed into ale.[6] Dramatic idence of a highly mobile Early Neolithic British lifestyle was provided in 00 by analysis of the remains of a woman and three children who had en buried in a pit in the chalk hills of Dorset during the late fourth illennium. Lead and strontium isotopes, accessible by means of new chnology, proved that all of them had lived at some point in a non-alkland environment, while the adult had grown up in the Mendip Hills, at ast 50 miles (80 kilometres) away.[7] Isotope analysis led to a yet more markable result around the same time, when it was revealed that the eolithic British seemed to have consumed virtually no marine food, in ntrast to those of the Mesolithic. This result seemed not to match the aterial evidence from the Scottish islands, and coastal areas of western itain, where fish bones and seashells are often found on sites from the riod. Some commentators therefore questioned its accuracy; but it has en accepted, provisionally, as true for most areas, and prompted eculation as to the reason. It has been suggested that a herding lifestyle ay have made fishing for and gathering seafood difficult, or else that some nd of religious taboo was imposed on its consumption, perhaps (for ample) because the sea had become associated with the dead. Whatever e answer, it is a powerful indication that the transition to the Neolithic ought considerable disruption of traditional world views.[8]

If that transition in Britain was both rapid and dramatic, this begs the estion of how it was accomplished. For most of the twentieth century a mple and confident answer was applied: that the Neolithic was brought by lonists from abroad. This was a Victorian idea, expressed most fully and fluentially by Sir William Boyd Dawkins in 1880: that the Palaeolithic habitants of Britain had been of the same race as the modern Inuit or skimo, whose lifestyle they had shared and who were driven north into the rctic by warlike newcomers who had introduced the Neolithic lifestyle.

ıese he pronounced to have been destroyed in turn by later, more chnologically advanced, invaders, leaving the Basques as their only odern descendants in Europe. They had therefore been, he declared, a ıall dark people even as the Basques were today.[9] This preoccupation with cial differences, and the superiority of some races over others, was a llmark of late Victorian thought, and its source of inspiration is obvious: e spread of Europeans in general, and the English-speaking peoples in rticular, over vast expanses of North America, Australia and New Zealand ıring the nineteenth century, subduing and sometimes exterminating the tive inhabitants. The same inspiration is equally obvious in a much later pular work on British prehistory, by Jacquetta Hawkes published in 1945, hich declared that, without this Neolithic invasion, the Mesolithic habitants of Britain might well have indefinitely 'remained as primitive as ose of North America, Africa or the Pacific at the time of their discovery Europeans'.[10] The heavyweight scholarly texts on Neolithic Britain that peared in the mid twentieth century carried the same message in more tailed and forensic terms, using local differences in Neolithic culture to ot the arrival of separate groups of colonists from France and the etherlands, most having travelled from the more civilized Mediterranean d brought some of its inventions. As late as 1954, the greatest ntemporary British expert on the Neolithic, Stuart Piggott, could portray e island as being settled piecemeal, by 'intrusive agricultural colonies tablished in areas uninhabited, or at most populated by a small number of ınter-fisher groups', like so much of the land occupied by modern British lonists.[11]

In the course of the late twentieth century, this portrait disintegrated, as e British Empire disappeared, emigration to colonies came to an end, and e United Kingdom turned instead into a multi-racial state belonging to the ıropean Union. The notion that the Neolithic British had been similar to ısques was never based on good evidence, and there remains no means hatever of judging the colour of their complexions. As for their size, their eletal remains had always suggested that they were only slightly shorter an present-day people (about the same height, indeed, as most of the itish until the nineteenth century), and of about the same build.[12] Less curely based was the new orthodoxy, dominant at the end of the twentieth

ntury, that the Neolithic lifestyle had in the main been adopted by the esolithic natives, who chose to take on new ideas and techniques from road.[13] It was admitted that there must have been some influx of wcomers, if only because the new techniques of farming needed to be ught by experts. Moreover, none of the domestic breeds of cattle and sheep uld have come from wild species in Europe, let alone Britain: they had all scended from Near Eastern strains, and been driven across the Continent. deed, it might be objected that the new orthodoxy was as much rooted in ntemporary cultural experience and assumption as the old: in the Britain the decades around AD 2000, an existing population learned new and ported technologies just as their Neolithic forebears were now presumed have done. Another recently developed scientific technique did, however, eigh in upon the side of this idea: that of genetics, using a technique veloped at Oxford University to recover DNA from ancient bones. fferent projects of analysis converged to suggest that, all over Europe, the ajority of the female bloodlines of the modern population derived from omen who had lived in the Continent before the Neolithic began. The male es pointed to a much more significant arrival of foreigners from the Near st as part of the adoption of farming, but in Western Europe that oportion was less than a third. The British evidence seems to testify to a mplex addition of new female and male genes in the Neolithic, amounting 10 to 30 per cent of the modern population, with southern England having e highest levels and the rest of Britain much lower.[14] By 2006 one author genetics, Robin McKie, could declare that ‘farming was an idea, not a ople’.[15] Britain seemed always to have done what it was doing at the ginning of the twenty-first century: absorbed immigrants who brought eful ideas and skills and could be granted work permits and then sidency.

Actually, things are not that simple, because the genetic record cannot ll us how that 10 to 30 per cent of Neolithic newcomers arrived in any strict: as traders, marital partners, preachers, instructors, welcome new ighbours, or conquerors. There is a considerable difference between those les. Not a single archaeological site has yet yielded good evidence for this oblem, and by the end of the first decade of the new century two of the ost prominent experts on Neolithic Britain, Richard Bradley and Timothy

arvill, had acknowledged that no variant of the two basic models of planation – that the new lifestyle was adopted by natives or brought by w settlers – fitted the data really well.[16] In 2010 a study of apparent pulation densities concluded that the seeming growth in the number of habitants of Britain between 4100 and 3400 BC was too sudden and amatic to be accounted for except in terms of large-scale migration from e Continent.[17] It is, however, very hard to compare shifting and mobile pulations, and to distinguish an increase in people from an increase in the tivities of those people; and to succeed in both would still leave open the uestion of the relationship between newcomers and existing inhabitants. In 011 a comprehensive comparison of more than 1,500 statistically modelled tes for Early Neolithic sites in Britain and Ireland yielded the conclusion at the Neolithic lifestyle had arrived there just before 4000 BC, probably in e Thames Estuary. By 3900, aspects of it could be found all over south-stern Britain, and within another hundred years they had covered much of e rest of the island, save for the extreme west and north. By 3700 the estyle had more or less spread across the archipelago.[18] This would ggest that farming had originally been brought from Europe by colonists ho arrived in the Thames, and that it had swiftly been adopted by the tives: but none of this is securely proved by the better dating. All told, the oblem of how the Neolithic arrived in Britain does not seem to have been lved at the time of writing; and with that admission, it must be knowledged, any chance of reconstructing the manner in which attitudes the cosmos were altered by the change has been immediately much minished.

Thinking Monumentally

One aspect of the classic Neolithic lifestyle, as defined in the 1950s, was e erection of large human structures upon the land: for the first time in ehistoric Europe, people articulated their ideas about the world in great uilding works. The making of large monuments has not been confined to rming peoples – hunter-gatherers have raised them in Canada and ustralia – and in this as in all other respects the European Neolithic was verse and selective, the communities in the centre and south-east of the ontinent investing much effort in domestic buildings but little in

remonial structures.[19] Those of western Europe, however, coupled the loption of farming with the creation of a completely unprecedented ımber, range and scale of ritual constructions, making a new and dramatic stinction between human and non-human elements in the landscape.

Christopher Tilley, an archaeologist who has thought even harder than ost about how Neolithic people viewed their world, has highlighted the fference in attitude that the clearing of land for farming would have made. revealed contours and profiles fully, in many cases for the first time in veral millennia, and so perhaps inspired those who carried out the work to construct the land itself for the first time, shaping it even as natural forces d done before.[20] Although much of Britain seems to have remained ooded in some measure throughout the fourth millennium, the Western les and the extreme north of Scotland were apparently denuded of trees by 00 BC, while much of the eastern Dorset chalklands were open by the end the millennium.[21] This did not mean that the land itself ceased to matter a spiritual entity, or a mass of them. Natural marks in it – such as rock tcrops, pools and great trees – that had been important to nomadic hunter-therers, would have retained their sense of the special and powerful for ople wandering with livestock or tilling fields nearby. Inevitably, much of is sense of significance is lost to archaeology. For example, the prominent ll of Caburn in the South Downs of Sussex was surrounded by activity in e New Stone Age, yet carefully avoided, its summit being covered by yew es.[22] Caburn is now perhaps the most heavily excavated site in Britain, ith no fewer than 170 trenches dug into it by archaeologists to date, so ere can be little doubt of this avoidance, but why was it avoided? Were the es a sacred grove, the main religious centre of the district? Or were the adowy stands of yew regarded as spiritually menacing, a place to which try was under taboo, or was the tough wood of this species of tree simply o much of a deterrent for stone axes when there was easier terrain all ound? This draws attention to the wider problem that we do not know how r the coming of farming changed people's attitudes to the land. It is tirely possible that woodland, which had hitherto been an indivisible part the human world and a vital economic resource, began to be seen as a parate and alien realm; but we cannot tell.[23]

What is abundantly evident from the archaeological record is that the tural world continued to play a very important part in spiritual life. Burials ere still sometimes made in caves, as they had been since humans first peared in that part of Europe, and often in the same areas as before, such the Mendip Hills and North Wales. Caves were indeed used for this rpose more often in the Neolithic than previously, and continued to be nployed for it during the whole of the remainder of British prehistory.[24] In e southern chalklands of England, and the Breckland heaths of Norfolk, e people of the New Stone Age found deposits of flint on the surface of the ound which were quite good enough for tool-making. Yet they took the fficult and dangerous course of sinking shafts to dig out the glossy, strous stone found deep underground. Its beauty was no doubt an traction, but it may also have been thought to carry arcane power from ving lain at such a depth: a possibility reinforced by the fact that the iners left deposits of pottery, tools and animal and human bones behind em, as if making offerings to the subterranean powers into whose realm ey had intruded. It is possible that the flint thus obtained was thought to t as a transmitter between human and spirit realms. Miles Russell has ted that the mines tended to be sunk in places apart from any other human tivity and which commanded impressive views: his suggestion is that they ay have been settings for rites of passage as well as industrial activity.[25]

This sense of negotiation, by which humans gave presents to special aces and received rewards from them in return, is even more evident in the dustry of axe production. Axe heads of extraordinary stone, valued more r its aesthetic appearance than its practical utility, were prized objects in e period, often kept as sacred or artistic objects instead of being put to ork. They were traded over long distances: those made of dolerite rock in ittany are found from Gloucestershire to the Pyrenees, while those of the deite of the Western Alps were traded across an area from Ireland stwards to the Danube and Elbe basins, and south into Italy and Spain.[26] ven those that were suited to heavy use as tools evidently had more than raightforwardly practical associations. Repeatedly in the British Isles, axes ere made not from the most accessible deposits of a particular sort of stone t from those in dramatic natural settings, such as islands and mountains, hich were apparently seen as charged with supernatural power.[27] One of

e most important factories was in the Langdale Pikes, some of the highest aks of the Cumbrian Mountains or Lake District. The climb to the site is ll long and hard, and anyone who makes it enters a world where wisps of ouds drift along the surface of the land, and silence is usually absolute save r the voices of wind and of thunder, and where pieces of rock, broken by ost and storm, come loose from their places and roll crashing down the opes of scree. It is a place where the majesty of stone is most evident, ited with that of the heavens themselves.

Furthermore, even when detached from the locations which provided em, building materials and artefacts were themselves not necessarily seen inanimate. Posts could remain imbued with the spirits of the trees that ey had been, and to build with stone could be to fill structures with the irits of those stones. Studies of traditional peoples in modern times have vealed that they commonly viewed stoves, weapons, tools and ornaments living entities. They believed that material things create persons as much persons make them, and that they likewise have life phases. Non-human odies such as pots or houses were readily seen as the outward forms of non-uman beings, which transform the social contexts in which they move and ange their own meanings as those contexts are transformed. This makes e fashioning of a tool or a vessel very much akin to a magical act: a rite in elf, as well as the production of a functional object. It is notable, indeed, at in many periods of British prehistory before the Iron Age, pottery was ried on ceremonial rather than domestic sites. This has made one chaeologist, Ann Woodward, wonder if much, if not all, Neolithic ramics were produced for special purposes such as ritual deposition or eat feasts, instead of regular use. Traditional peoples also commonly lack e modern sense of the human self as indivisible, seeing it instead as netrating and being penetrated by other beings in the world around.[28] It is ssible, or perhaps even likely, that the Neolithic inhabitants of Britain ared this mindset, though this can probably never be proved.

All these reflections provide a framework for considering the way in hich those inhabitants might have conceived the monuments they built ith such zest; and before going on to consider what those structures were, it ay be worthwhile to think a little further about the nature of onumentality in a prehistoric society. Richard Bradley set the pattern for

is exercise in a series of studies which emphasized the novelties, rather an the continuities, which the adoption of farming has commonly brought attitudes to the land. Farmers exploit nature rather than belonging to it, d enclose and own resources, rather than making paths through them and ing them. To erect monuments can be one way of stamping that sense of vnership on the land's surface, reordering and dominating it. They ground ace in an entirely new, deliberate and human, sense of construction; dure to become highly visible representatives of the past; and can change eir meanings to succeeding generations, while remaining in the same form. ey orchestrate human experience, operating sometimes as stages and metimes as screens.[29] In the British Neolithic in particular, they are so mmon, while the remains of daily life are so few and transitory, that it is ssible that the people of the period viewed life itself, to an unusual degree, a brief journey to a different, and eternal existence.[30]

None the less, it is possible to exaggerate the role of Neolithic onuments both as a means of possessing and dominating land, and as rmanent structures. Joshua Pollard has agreed that they were rarely an position of built forms on an empty landscape and were instead a new rm of working with places which had already seen some kind of previous tivity and so accumulated a sense of being special.[31] This observation ould harmonize well with the pattern noted by many archaeologists, that eolithic monuments were frequently reshaped, and sometimes apparently liberately destroyed after construction, rather than left in an enduring form ce built. Julian Thomas in particular has drawn attention to this as ggesting that it was the places concerned which were really important, and at the human works placed upon them were different ways of drawing tention to them and facilitating specific activities there.[32] This still allows r an interpretation of those activities in terms of the control and ploitation of a piece of land, but it also recognizes a strong possibility that e land concerned was regarded as powerful in itself and as an active agent human affairs. The pattern of construction and reconstruction, moreover, vites a different form of reflection: that the act of making a Neolithic onument may have been the vital activity in itself, a prolonged ritual of emendous importance for religious and social life rather than simply a

ocess aimed at an end result: a structure which would stand as witness to
makers and their beliefs.

Now that these preliminary considerations have been made, it is time to rvey what is presently known and thought about the kind of monuments hich the people of Britain during the fourth millennium actually erected.

The Tomb-Shrines: General Reflections

One type of construction in particular defines the Early Neolithic of estern Europe. It consists of a chamber of large stones (‘megaliths’), ually formed of uprights holding up one or more big rocks acting as a vering, and usually covered or supported by a mound or cairn. In regions ithout supplies of stone, timber chambers were sometimes made instead. his basic kind of structure is found all around the western seaboard of the ontinent in the fourth millennium, from south-eastern Spain to southern veden, and including most of the British Isles. Even now, after tens of nturies of destruction, about 40,000 examples still survive, none identical form but most falling into clear regional traditions of architecture. aturally enough, these monuments have been known for centuries by mes native to the languages of the countries in which they stand, though e Breton term dolmen, ‘table-stone’, has become widely used ternationally for many. Scholars were stuck for something to call them hich accurately sums up their nature, and the generic name ‘chambered mb’ was gradually adopted in the early twentieth century. It was based on e fact that many of these constructions contained the remains of human ings, often in great quantity. On the other hand, it has frequently been knowledged that some seem never to have done so, and that the people posited in most were too few to have represented more than a selection of e population at the time when they were used.[33] The present tendency nong current experts on the Neolithic is to continue to employ the term mb’ for lack of any better, while acknowledging its limitations in this ntext. An attempt will be made here to overcome the problem by adopting e expression ‘tomb-shrine’, which recognizes the presence of the dead at ost of these monuments, but also the equally apparent fact that the uctures were not simply receptacles for them, but functioned as sites of

ual in their own right. Often, indeed, they are the only ceremonial sites of hich we have evidence in the landscape of their time.

Tomb-shrines have long been recognized as some of the most impressive ehistoric monuments in Europe, and in many areas the most impressive. ntil the 1970s, however, they were regarded as the comparatively primitive oducts of a savage backwater, ultimately inspired by the much more ıpressive, and older, constructions of the Near East. It was frequently ated that Egypt's Step Pyramid, dating from the mid third millennium BC, as the oldest stone building in the world. That honour still belongs to the ear East, currently being held by the temple complex at Göbekli Tepe in ırkey, erected about 12,000 years ago by a culture that was in European rms Mesolithic.[34] The tomb-shrines of the Atlantic coasts of Europe, wever, have now been relocated by improved carbon dating to a period ıe to two thousand years older than the pyramid. They represent the first idespread stone constructions of the human race. Where the tradition of aking them began is still not agreed, except that it was plainly not in itain. Megalithic tomb-shrines in Spain, Portugal and western France have l produced dates going back to the mid fifth millennium, and probably rlier.[35] In general, these monuments seem to appear in Britain, and rapidly come widespread, in the first half of the fourth millennium, soon after the loption of farming, or in some areas perhaps just before it. In northern ırope they appear to have arrived later still: those of the Netherlands, for ample, date from the second half of the fourth millennium.[36]

The building of this style of monument therefore seems to have spread om south to north along the Atlantic coasts, at what in prehistoric terms as a fast pace, as part of the equally rapid importation of the Neolithic estyle into each region. Where it began, within a vast span of land etching from southern Spain to Brittany, is at present unknown. Nor is it ssible to identify a single style of tomb-shrine as being the primordial one, cause as soon as the tradition was taken into any new area it seems to have owered there almost immediately into a variety of different forms. oreover, the source of inspiration for it is equally unclear, natural rock ıtcrops and houses being the most popular candidates.[37] It is distinctly ssible that the long mounds which covered tomb-shrines in large areas of

itain and France were inspired by the long houses built by Neolithic ople in central Europe in the preceding period.[38] This was something like orthodoxy by the 1990s, but it has recently been challenged by the fact at better dating has revealed a seven-hundred-year gap between the end of e long houses and the beginning of the long mounds.[39] There was a neral tendency in the late twentieth century to speak of the tomb-shrines in neral as ‘houses of the dead’ (or at least of the special dead), but they semble the shapes of actual dwellings only in certain areas.[40]

In view of all these uncertainties, it is not surprising that no clearly reed explanations currently exist for the meaning and purpose of this first eat European monumental tradition. For most of the twentieth century, the mb-shrines were regarded as the holy places of a new religion spread by ttlers or missionaries; which, as they are plainly ceremonial rather than actical constructions, and usually dominated their landscapes, made good nse. Their different styles and sizes would therefore correspond to the fferent kinds of church and chapel within which the Christian religion has en practised; and the simile here was the easier to accept in that the egalithic faith concerned was thought to have spread to Western Europe om the Near East.[41] Very occasionally this notion has still been heard in e twenty-first century, for example from a leading scholar of Neolithic eland, Michael O’Kelly, who declared that the tomb-shrines of his land ere ‘implanted here and there by a small group led by an accomplished eacher’.[42] Significantly, O’Kelly was at the end of his life when he wrote ese words, and in general in the 1970s the concept of a megalithic religion as abandoned by most specialists. The occasion for this change was the alization that the tomb-shrines were in fact older than the eastern onuments from which they were supposed to have derived. None the less, e change in dating did not in itself invalidate the idea that they were pressions of a particular form of religion. That idea disappeared because it as replaced by another, which became dominant in the 1980s and 1990s: at this kind of monument was developed as part of the transition to a rming economy, and represented a new way of looking at the land sulting from that alteration.

In this formulation, tomb-shrines were built as territorial markers, by rming groups who were dividing up an area between them and warning off wcomers: as most were striking and novel additions to the landscape, they sually expressed the fact that the surrounding area was now occupied, ploited and controlled. The human bones which most of these monuments ntained were, according to this view, those of the first farmers to occupy at plot, who were then revered as ancestors by their descendants as part of continuing process of affirming group identity and asserting rights of ssession.[43] This concept was certainly based on sound anthropology, as ditional peoples in other parts of the world sometimes used monuments, mbining the functions of tomb and shrine, in just this way. It also, wever, represented a secularization of prehistory, depriving religious lief of any status as a force in itself and grounding all ideology ultimately economic needs and the power politics which these generated. nsciously or not, it owed much to Marxism, and there may be no incidence in the fact that its popularity peaked as British archaeology me to be dominated by a generation who had been students at the apogee Marxist ideology around 1970. The concept has tended to die away in the enty-first century, largely because of the change in the understanding of e Neolithic British economy. If that depended on wandering with herds d flocks rather than tilling and grazing a specific block of farmland, the mb-shrines became markers along paths (initially through woodland) ther than the spiritual centres of family plots. The notion of them as rritorial boasts and warnings also failed now to explain why they often ustered closely together in certain areas. It would have worked if their ndscape had been full of static farmsteads, to each of which one was tached, but no trace of such farmsteads has been found across most of itain.

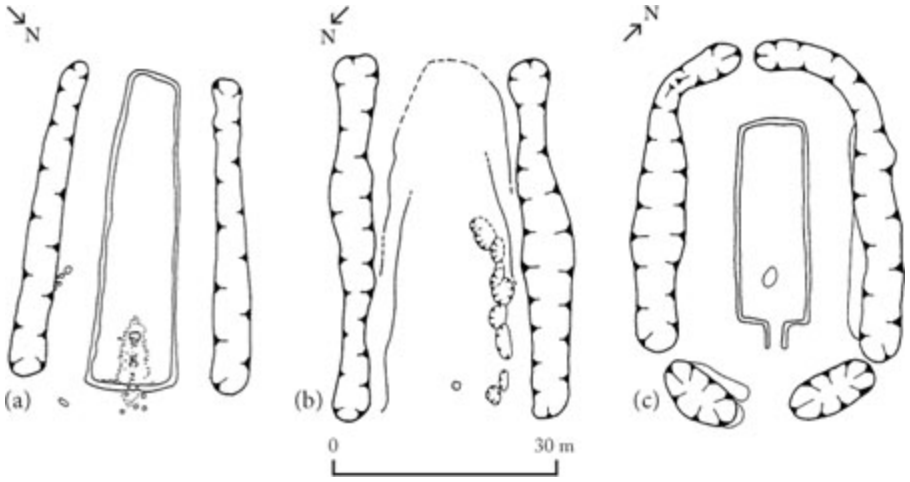
The concept of these monuments as centres for ancestor worship has en more durable, but can no longer be stated without difficulty or allenge. In 2002 James Whitley launched a direct attack on the manner in hich ancestors seemed to have become the defining entities of the British eolithic. He cannily related the development to a modern yearning for ntact with a national past from which the tremendous changes of odernity had left his contemporaries feeling severed and bereaved. He

ointed out that while some agricultural societies studied by anthropologists d maintained shrines to ancestral spirits, many had not, while pastoral oples, such as those who seemed now to be typical of Neolithic Britain, nerally did not. He added that the presence of the dead at ritual sites did t in itself prove that the dead concerned were regarded as ancestral. oreover, where traditional peoples did venerate ancestors, they commonly d so in special shrines away from burial sites.[44] The effect of such iticisms was rapidly to dilute the usage of the term ‘ancestor’ when plied to such monuments. Alasdair Whittle, in particular, redefined it as gnifying ‘any forebears who are remembered’, whether generalized or dividual.[45] In 2011 he and a team of co-workers decided that the tomb-rines were markers of place, but more of places connected to cosmology d spirituality than just territory.[46] It seems therefore that scholars are rcling round towards a vaguer version of the twentieth-century orthodoxy: at these monuments were centres for ritual activity which was commonly ediated, at least partly, through the dead.[47] Such general reflections on eir nature cannot, however, even begin to do justice to the true complexity d variety of these monuments as a type. For that, detailed local case udies are needed, and it is time to proceed to a selection from the British idence.

The Tomb-Shrines: Four Case-Studies

The first regional study to be offered here is that of the long barrows of ussex. The term ‘long barrow’, so frequently employed by scholars and neral public alike for the most common kind of southern British tomb-rine, is almost as old as England itself. ‘Barrow’ is simply the southern nglish dialect word for a burial mound, from the Old English *beorg*, a hill, d an Anglo-Saxon charter distinguishes one such mound as a *longnam orge*. It was the seventeenth-century antiquary John Aubrey who first used e term specifically to describe extended mounds or cairns made in the rly Neolithic. Some cover stone chambers of the classic tomb-shrine kind, hile others do not, and to these Stuart Piggott gave the name ‘earthen’, hich has stuck: the Sussex examples are of this kind.[48] Over 300 earthen ng barrows have been identified, across most of the eastern half of Britain om Aberdeenshire to the South Downs, with western projections into

orset and Galloway: most of the surviving specimens are found in English alk country, though aerial photography is now revealing an increasing mber in river valleys that have been ploughed away above ground level. ey range in length from about 154 feet (14 to 125 metres, averaging 47), d can be rectangular, oval or trapezoidal in shape. Fourth-fifths have nking ditches. They have yielded (crude) dates from around 3800 to ound 3000 BC, with most clustering in the centre of the millennium.[49] ese massive whale-backed mounds, grown with tall grasses, yellow and ue flowers (buttercups and harebells) and fragrant wild thyme, are among e most imposing prehistoric monuments of the English chalklands. When eshly made, they would have been a brilliant white from the chalk rock, d shone beneath sun and moon.



13 Earthen long barrows: (a) Fussell's Lodge (Wiltshire); (b) Horslip (Wiltshire); (c) Wor Barrow orset). The long mounds lie between or within ditches represented by hatching on the plans. The rslip mound had been ploughed down more than the others, but seems to have contained no uctures or human remains. Wor Barrow held burials, and Fussell's Lodge about sixty of them in a oden chamber. Redrawn after Timothy Darvill, Miles Russell and Julian Thomas.

At first sight (and in much traditional writing by archaeologists), they uld be seen as an outgrowth of the tomb-shrine tradition, as most which ve been excavated have yielded human remains. They tend to occur, oreover, in regions which lack the large surface rocks needed to build egalithic chambers. Some look like perfect matches for that tradition, such Fussell's Lodge in Wiltshire, where the mound covered a timber chamber hich had held the bones of over fifty individuals. Most, however, contained

e burials of only a few people, and scattered across southern England are me which had none at all.[50] The extreme case here is that of Sussex, here long barrows are found at both ends of the county's chalk hills, and ly one out of a dozen has proved to contain any human remains (and those nsisted of just three fragments). This has propelled one archaeologist, iles Russell, into suggesting that any association between such monuments d the dead was incidental. He has pointed out that more human bone has mmonly been found on other kinds of Neolithic ritual sites, as will be scribed, and in places assumed to have had a practical primary purpose, ch as the flint mines. Instead he emphasizes the mound itself as the sential part of the monument, as a structured assemblage of soil, timber d stone to which deposits of special material had been added, often in the tches: occasionally flint arrowheads and knives, and pottery, more mmonly the bones of cattle, pigs, birds and humans. Russell suggested at the mounds represented a code or language, each embodying the entity and memory-bank of a particular community, and perhaps also ntaining offerings to their deities. Certainly they were colossal vestments of energy: to put up an average one, ten people would have eded to work eight hours a day for three to seven months.[51] It is also rtain that there were strong regional variations in the components of mmemoration put into the mounds or over which the mounds were ected. In eastern and southern Scotland they were commonly built over rge post holes, the posts in which were allowed to rot before the long rrow was constructed. Gordon Noble has suggested that the posts presented trees, which were not only important elements in the Early eolithic landscape but potent symbols of birth, death and degeneration. The sts would therefore decay like the human bodies which were added after ey had gone.[52] This metaphor reappears much further south, at addenham in the Cambridgeshire Fenland, where a long barrow covered a ng, low timber structure (at most three feet, or just under a metre, high), in hich at least five people had been interred. The authors of the excavation port suggested that it would have been like burial within a tree trunk.[53]

Thus far, Russell's argument that the mound itself was the essential ature of the monument seems well sustained. It becomes more contentious hen considering the second case study: that of the Cotswold–Severn group

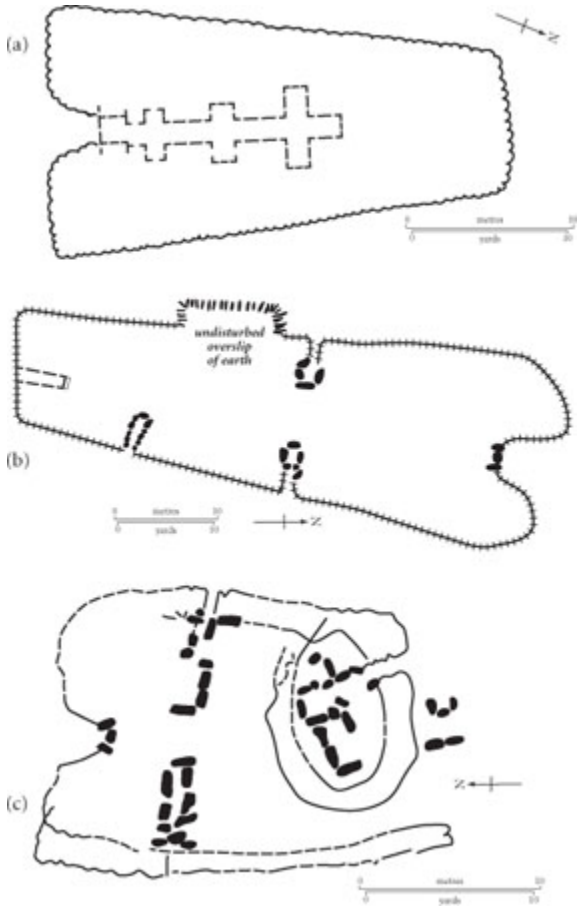
long barrows. These are very similar to the earthen kind in size, shape and ientation, and where the two kinds overlap, as they do on the north iltshire and Dorset chalk hills, they are now sometimes indistinguishable the eye. What marks them off as a separate group is that they cover egalithic chambers, often lined with dry-stone walling and with more such alling stretching around the mound and defining a forecourt at the broader d. As their name implies, their epicentre lies on the limestone Cotswold lls, stretching from north Somerset through Gloucestershire into xfordshire: a total of 140 of them once existed there. They are also found the other side of the Severn Estuary, along the coastal plain of South ales as far west as the Gower Peninsula, and in parts of the Black ountains. In the Cotswolds, their long, sloping green mounds, often now rrounded by modern walls and grown with beech trees, are the most aracteristic prehistoric monuments of the region, rising out of green stures or from fields of red earth in winter and waving cereals in summer. hen first made, of piled-up, newly cut limestone blocks, they would have eamed like freshly minted gold, making as glorious a sight in the wider ndscape as the white mounds of the chalk hills. A few of this group were stored as visitor attractions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, llowed by a spate of others in the mid twentieth, most of which ended up the care of English Heritage. Inevitably, those chosen for this treatment ere the largest and most impressive, above all those with passages entered om the forecourt and side cells leading off these. The latter actually present a rare variety of design within the group, and their disproportionate currence among the selection preserved for public view tends to give any visitors a misleading impression of the whole. Most have smaller ambers, entered from the side of the mound or completely enclosed within

14 Classic whale-backed mound of a Cotswold–Severn long barrow, in this case Hetty Pegler's mp on the Cotswold Edge of Gloucestershire.

15 Another Cotswold–Severn long barrow, from a greater distance: even a mile off, the huge ound of Adam's Grave dominates the skyline above the chalk scarp plunging to the Vale of Pewsey Wiltshire.

It was Glyn Daniel who first defined the group, in 1937, and Timothy arvill who has produced the most recent comprehensive study of it.[54] The ng barrows comprised by it possess one more distinctive characteristic: at their stone chambers almost always contained human bone, and usually

for the space – in large quantities: an average of forty to fifty people in ch. Often bodies were placed there whole and decayed inside the barrow, d sometimes they were cleaned down to bone elsewhere, by being posed to the attentions of animals or buried temporarily. In both cases, ce inside, the remains usually became mixed with each other, in an parently deliberate merging of the individual with the collective, though ere was sometimes segregation by sex or age in different chambers of the me mound. Both sexes, and all ages, were indeed represented by the nes, and in some cases certainly, and in most cases possibly, burials within e chambers took place successively, at intervals. In some proven cases, and rhaps more generally, the entrance to the chambers was closed and then opened, at various times, and individual bones look to have been removed, rhaps for use in ritual. Timothy Darvill has calculated that the number of ople found in each well-preserved barrow means that it could have nctioned as a family vault for a group of ten to fifteen people over a period about a hundred and fifty years.[55] In that case, they would have been true mbs, and Russell's interpretation, so cogent for the Sussex long barrows, s to be reversed for those of Gloucestershire and its neighbours: the large ining mound would have been there to advertise, glorify and protect the ambers which it covered, and the humans lying within them.



16 Cotswold–Severn long barrows, with differing arrangements of stone chambers (a) Stoney tleton, near Bath; (b) Belas Knap, near Cheltenham; and (c) Ty Isaf, between Talgarth and ergavenny in the Black Mountains of South Wales. (a) and (b) have been restored and are intained for public access; (c) is now just a low mound in a field. Redrawn after Glyn Daniel.

Few goods were ever deposited with the bodies: some pottery, worked nts, exotic pebbles, stone discs, beads, bone pins, and the bones of dogs d (above all) cattle. Animal bones are also common in the forecourts, pecially the skulls of pigs and cattle. They may have functioned as otective talismans or totemic symbols, but they may also be the remains of asts, as bonfires were often lit in the same spaces before the mound.[56] The ientation of long barrows of all kinds, chambered and earthen, calls out for me explanation, as in every county the higher and broader end of most ces between north-east and south-east, and most of the remainder face her parts of the eastern or southern quadrants. This suggests some ignment on the sunrise at different times of the year, but a large minority of e mounds are orientated outside this span. In the 1980s, Aubrey Burl,

ing the earthen long barrows of Salisbury Plain as his sample, decided that ey were aligned instead upon the movements of the moon.[57] There remain, wever, a number, even in Burl's original sample let alone in other areas, at face in directions outside the moon's range as well. In the 1990s, a storian of astronomy, John North, surveyed a large sample of such barrows southern and eastern England and decided that they were orientated upon e rising and setting of some of the brightest stars; an idea which has not ught on, perhaps because it does not seem wholly to rule out incidence.[58] Experts in these monuments therefore now speak vaguely of possible or probable connection with sun or moon.[59]

The most exciting recent development concerning the Cotswold–Severn ng barrows relates to their dating. Since 2000, the existing carbon-based tes have been refined, applying a statistical method, Bayes' theorem, hich allows a much greater precision in the results when derived through mputer modelling. This procedure was applied to a sample of Cotswold ng barrows, and the Fussell's Lodge earthen one, and it was revealed that ey had been a relatively short-lived phenomenon, all having been built and ed between 3800 and 3350 BC, and most between 3750 and 3600, and each ıe active only for a period corresponding to from one to five generations of ople. This would make a fit with Timothy Darvill's theory that they were mily vaults, and opens up the possibility that the same social group might ve constructed and put burials into a number of these monuments in ccession. In that case, the clustering would be explained, and once more e suggestion that they marked particular territories, even for people with a madic lifestyle, would be strengthened; but, once more, not proved.[60] hat the new evidence does erode is the idea that the barrows were centres ancestor worship, if the people whose bones went into their chambers had en members of a living community. Access to the interior of the barrows make new burials, or (perhaps) to take out bones, must have been a oulish business, because the entrances to most needed a crawl, the ambers within were not large and many would have contained decaying rpses. We cannot tell at this distance whether it would have been regarded an honour or an ordeal, and whether it was confined to special persons or ken in turn by all in the group.

17 Entrance and passage of Stoney Littleton.

18 Forecourt and chambers of Nympsfield Long Barrow, on the Cotswold Edge. The barrow lost capstones centuries ago and has recently been tidied up as a visitor attraction.

The third case study consists of the megalithic tomb-shrines of West ales, that part of the land beyond the Gower Peninsula and south of the ver Teifi contained in the old counties of Pembrokeshire and rmarthenshire. These twenty-eight monuments are mostly classic lmens, consisting of a capstone supported by uprights. They have in the st been classed in different ways according to form, but the most recent d simplest classification, that of Alasdair Whittle and Vicki Cummings, cognizes just two basic types: simple box-like chambers, sometimes with a ort passage and generally with a large capstone; and a smaller kind of amber in which a thinner capstone rests upon the earth itself at one end.[61]

ome caution is needed in accepting even this distinction, for it has been inted out that some of the examples of the second, ‘earth-fast’, variety ay have lost uprights or collapsed at one end.[62] When both apparent rieties are included, twenty-eight survive at the present day, standing like ant grey stone mushrooms or bracket fungi in meadows, moorland or umps of bracken. They cluster thickly in coastal regions of Pembrokeshire t are spread along the whole Welsh coast between the Gower and the outh of the Teifi, with many outliers inland. The largest, finest and most mous is Pentre Ifan among the gentle slopes of the eastern Presceli ountains: the gazelle of dolmens with its tapering uprights on which the ting main capstone appears to float rather than rest, and a broad, curving çade of megaliths on either side. No reliable dates have been obtained for e ‘earth-fast’ chambers, which seem unique to the region and may be Late eolithic; but a single one, of *c.* 3500, exists for the chambers with a mplete set of uprights, and indeed they belong to a class of tomb-shrine und all round the Irish Sea, which elsewhere has been dated to the fourth illennium.[63] In major respects the West Welsh monuments make a contrast ith the Cotswold–Severn long barrows. It is now generally thought that ey were never covered by mounds or cairns, but were at most supported by led stones for some of their height. Furthermore, the dominant burial rite ithin them was cremation, and human bones have indeed rarely been found side the chambers.

These distinctive characteristics have naturally produced much recent scussion of their nature and purpose. Alasdair Whittle and Vicki ummings have argued that these monuments were not straightforward ambers for burials as the Cotswold–Severn barrows have been thought to , but huge stones raised up on supports for display and contemplation: in hittle’s lovely phrase, ‘stones that float to the sky’.[64] Colin Richards has reed that the capstones could have been sacred rocks, connected to ythology, that were lifted up in just this manner; in which case the scraps human bone, pottery and flint found inside the chambers would not have en burials but offerings to the holy stone. He has also noted that at one of e few such monuments to have been scientifically examined, Carreg mson on the north Pembrokeshire coast, the uprights seem to have been ought from different localities, suggesting that separate communities had

me together to build the structure.[65] It is difficult, however, to know how ltry the contents of the chambers actually were. If they always stood open, uch might have been removed in the millennia since they were deposited, d the acidic soil of the region destroys bones.[66] Only ten of these onuments have any recorded excavation, and most of that took place in the neteenth and early twentieth centuries, under relatively primitive nditions. Six show signs of having been dug over in even earlier periods, d ‘charcoal’ or ‘rich black earth’ was recorded at the same number.[67] This st detail matters a lot, because a newly developed technique of phosphate alysis, applied to an Irish tomb-shrine on similar acidic terrain, yielded st a few small fragments of human bone but a dark layer of soil.[68] It oved the ‘soil’ to consist entirely of eroded skeleton: so the present state of e evidence may seriously underestimate the number of burials that were ce placed inside the West Welsh tomb-shrines.

19 Arthur’s Stone, or Maen Cetti, on the Gower Peninsula, the most easterly of the West Welsh lmens.

20 Carreg Samson, a dolmen on the Pembrokeshire coast, with its capstone on a hoist to protect haeologists during the excavations of 1968 (which the author attended).

There is another contrast between these monuments and the English long rrows: the scholarly attention which has been dedicated to finding possible nnections between the latter and heavenly bodies has been devoted in the se of the former to possible connections with the surrounding landscape. his debate was started by Christopher Tilley in 1994 when he pointed out at just over half of the Neolithic tomb-shrines of Pembrokeshire were cated near dramatic natural outcrops of rock. He proposed therefore that eir primary purpose had been neither as places of burial nor as markers of rritories, but to represent ceremonial meeting points along pathways, hich drew attention to important natural features.[69] His suggestion ovoked a significant amount of criticism, centring on the objections that ncient stone structures would tend to survive better near rock outcrops, hich could be more easily quarried for building stone; that the ancient ndscape itself continually altered; and that it is impossible to determine

ow it appeared at any one point, as so many features, such as trees and nds, cannot be precisely reconstructed from the surviving evidence.[70] As a sult, the significance of position in the terrain has been reformulated, pecially by Vicki Cummings, to emphasize instead a more general manner which most tomb-shrines along the British shores of the Irish Sea, not erely in West Wales but in Gwynedd, Galloway and the Isle of Man, were ilt on slopes that provide views of the sea or of mountains, and often of th. The sea is in fact visible from 82 per cent and mountains from 78 per nt of the West Welsh examples. This observation caused Cummings to eculate that places which combined water and stone were appropriate for iritual transformations, perhaps including those of humans after death.[71]

Vicki Cummings has gone on from this to suggest that the sites of the mb-shrines of western Britain were also remarkably well chosen for visits effectively pilgrimages – by Neolithic seafarers, who might have carried t ceremonies at a succession of them along the same stretch of coastline, positing objects or human remains at some as they went.[72] Combined with e idea that the capstones represented rocks which were already sacred, and med in story, this is a very radical departure from the concept of these onuments as territorial markers and centres of ancestor cults for specific mmunities. It might indeed rebound upon the interpretation of the otswold–Severn barrows to the east. It has been noted that those barrows ere built from a collection of carefully selected materials, brought at fferent times to the construction sites and woven into the growing uctures: apparently taken from special places or associated with special ople.[73] In this case, the long barrows might themselves have been the sults of collective effort, bringing together different social groups rather an marking differences between them, and become places of seasonal or casional pilgrimage for these wandering bands. The notion that special ndscape settings were needed for the placement of the Irish Sea tomb-rines would also help to explain why they are missing from large areas of ntral and north-eastern Wales and north-western England, which have gns of Neolithic occupation but lack the necessary dramatic combinations sea and high ground. It does not, however, account for their striking sence from Cumbria, where the coastline has exactly the features of other rts of the Irish Sea coast where tomb-shrines clustered thickly, and where

e mountains were – to judge from the importance of the Langdale Pikes
es – regarded as special and powerful places during the period. Seemingly
ore subtle complexes of attitudes were at work, which are even more
fficult to recover.

21 ’The gazelle of West Welsh dolmens’: Pentre Ifan in the Preseli Mountains of Pembrokeshire.

It may therefore be seen that, across this zone of southern Britain, from
mbrokeshire to Sussex, the basic components of the tomb-shrine model –
e mound, the chamber and the dead – were apparently treated in three very
fferent ways, which in turn have called forth very different interpretations
om archaeologists. Likewise, still in the extreme south of Britain, Kent was
e location for another distinctive variation, while the equivalent
onuments in Cornwall bear more resemblance to those of West Wales than
those of other parts of the West of England. The same pattern is
produced across the northern two-thirds of Britain: nearly two hundred
egalithic tomb-shrines of different styles survive in the topmost quarter of
otland, from the Great Glen northwards, alone. How far any general
ligious idea united all the variations on the basic architectural language of
e form, even within Britain and its neighbouring islands let alone across
estern Europe, is impossible to say. Many shapes and usages of sacred
uilding can of course be generated by the same basic set of beliefs, as has
en demonstrated not merely in theological faiths such as Christianity but

others such as the paganism of ancient Greece. On the other hand, it is ually possible for the same basic form of structure, such as the late Roman silica, to be employed for very different purposes. To which of those tterns the tomb-shrines of the fourth millennium corresponded is at esent anybody's guess.

Causewayed Enclosures

Tomb-shrines are today the most widespread visible monuments of the estern European Early Neolithic, but a different kind of structure was even ore common in Europe at the period, and found much deeper into the terior of the Continent: the enclosure of land by the digging of a ditch and ten the piling up of the earth from it into a bank. This is as true of Britain elsewhere, but here the fourth millennium produced a particular variation this pattern: the definition of a special piece of land by the digging of rving, sausage-shaped ditches with gaps between them. The result was to eate a broken ring of excavated earth in the landscape. Sometimes one ch ring was enough, but often others were added. The circular shape was most always a very rough one, of crude ovals dug in straight sections, and equently incomplete circuits of ditch were dug, to produce semicircles. nly 35 per cent of those recorded, in fact, had complete circuits; but the en portions of some rested on hill slopes or watercourses which provided tural barriers, and hedges or woods might have served the same function others. They vary in size from roughly 1.25 to 25 acres (0.4 to 10 ctares), and both large and small examples are sometimes found in groups. ecause of the gaps between the ditches, since the 1920s this sort of onument has been given the standard name, among archaeologists, of ausewayed enclosure'.[74] When freshly dug, they would have been quite amatic sights, especially in chalk country where both the segments of ditch d the low banks piled beside them would have been a fresh white against e green terrain. The sheer labour needed to construct them – thousands of urs – makes them important monuments.

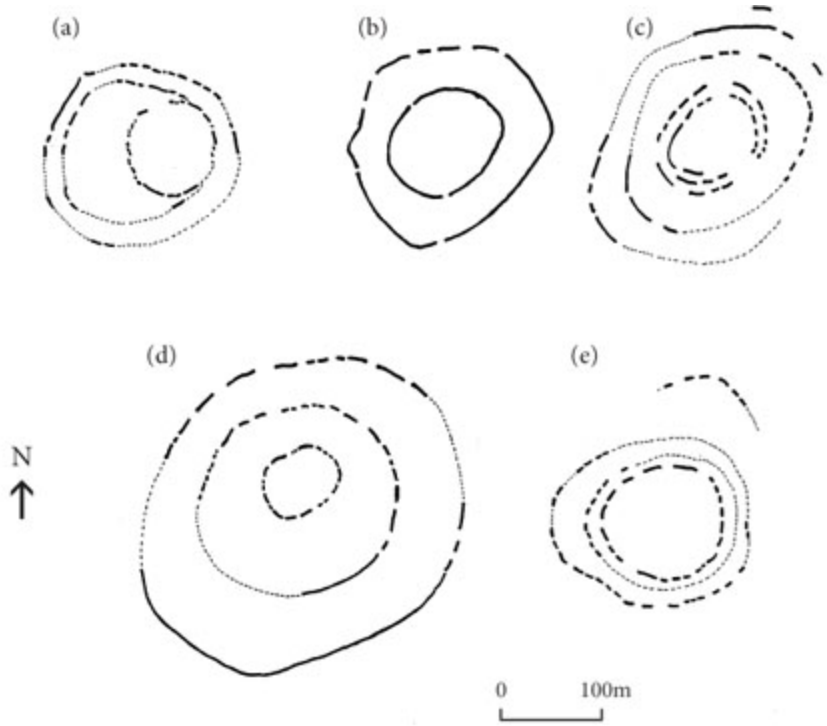
At the present day, unlike the megalithic tomb-shrines, causewayed closures are mostly invisible: at Windmill Hill and Knap Hill on the north iltshire chalk hills, the broken circuits of ditch and earthwork can still be scerned in the turf, but nobody could call these impressive relics of

ehistory. For the most part, they can only now be discovered from the air, crop marks in fields, and this process has revealed a rapidly increasing ımber, the tally of them having doubled since 1970. They are found as far est as Ulster, Anglesey and the Isle of Man, but are generally a ıenomenon of the southern two-thirds of England. Of more than a hundred ıown or suspected by 2010, almost all are on English soil, mostly in the essex chalk hills, the south-east, East Anglia, the Thames Valley and the ıst Midlands. They show up so much better on light upland earth like ıalk, however, that this may massively distort their perceived range, and it ay be noted that the densest concentration of them yet discovered is tually in the lower Welland Valley in the East Midlands.[75] Often they were ade to the side of prominent natural features, such as a hill crest or a river nd, which may already have been seen as sacred or otherwise significant. ıey occur in much the same terrain as earthen long barrows, though rarely ry close to those: they were usually the first monuments in their own enerally wooded) landscapes. They represent the first human enclosure of ɔen space in the story of Britain. The developments in dating of Neolithic es, based on computer use of Bayes' theorem, have had an important ıpact on knowledge of these structures. They appeared in *c.* 3700 BC ound the Thames Estuary, and spread out from it so rapidly that between 50 and 3550 they seem to have been the favourite monumental form of e south-eastern British Neolithic, starting later than the long barrows but en running parallel to them in use. The largest may have been built in ıges, over anything from five to seventy-five years, and used for three to ur centuries. Most, however, were abandoned after shorter periods of tween one and forty years.[76]

22 Distribution of causewayed enclosures in Britain.

Some sense of the variety that the enclosures represent, as a
ıenomenon, can be captured by looking at a few of the most famous
:amples. The most celebrated of all – virtually the definitive one in the
id-twentieth century – is also the largest: that on Windmill Hill, which was
:cavated in the 1920s and has been analysed at times ever since.[77] Large
nounts of carefully deposited material were recovered from the ditches, of
hich most was animal bone, primarily cattle but also pig and sheep or goat,
ith some of dog. The cattle were sometimes buried whole rather than being
e remains of feasts, as were dogs, and cattle skulls were put against the
useways. There was also pottery, worked flint, worked stone of different
pes, some imported from abroad, worked animal bones and chalk blocks,
d deer antlers. Thirty-four pieces of human bone were among the
semblage, as were two pieces of chalk carved like penises and more
ssibly worked into figurines, balls and cups. The authors of the most
cent study have concluded that while it would be hard to prove that the

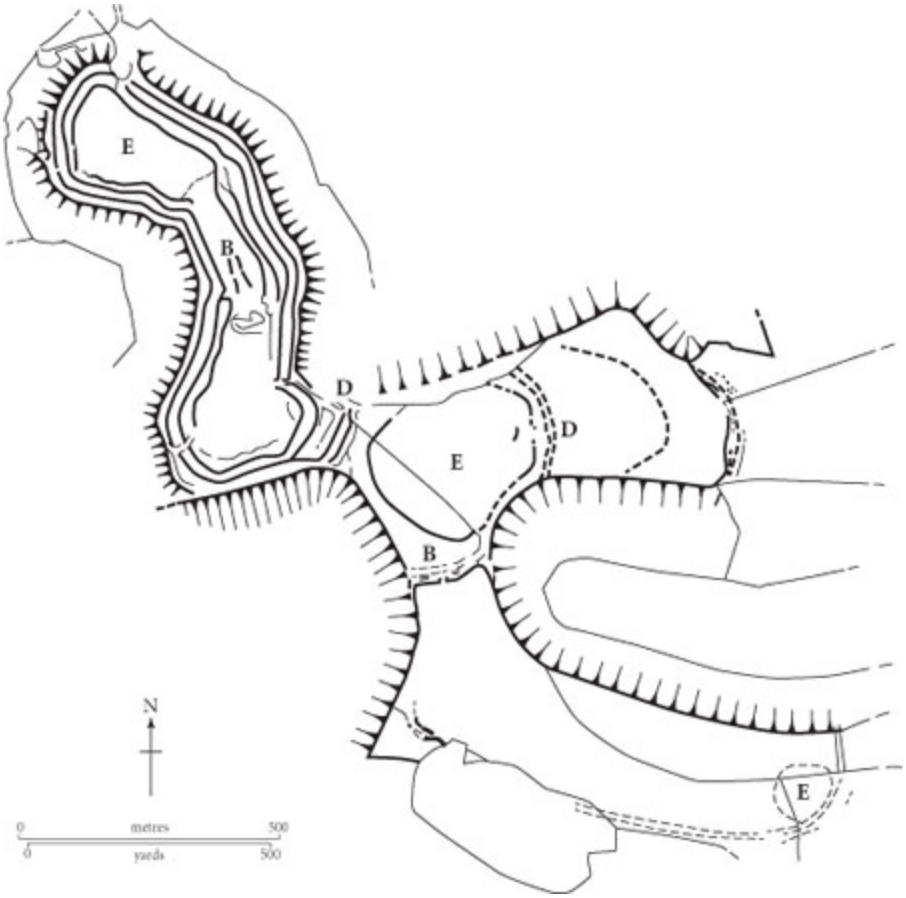
ırial of these objects was a religious activity, it was certainly a ‘meaningful cial practice’, helping to create meaning and sustain values: virtually all pects of Neolithic life that are accessible through archaeology are presented there.[78] Another large and famous site is that at Hambledon Hill, here the Dorset chalk hills prepare to drop into the West Country lowlands: ke Windmill Hill, it commands a fine view. It was excavated by a team led Roger Mercer between 1974 and 1986. Again, the ditches were full of posits, having been carefully scoured before items were placed in them, d there were ninety-seven pits inside with more carefully structured acement of items. There were, however, two separate enclosures on the ll, which had been used for different purposes, creating a total complex hich is to date the biggest yet uncovered to be based on this sort of onument. The main one was given deposits of human bones (some from mplete burials but most weathered or carefully scraped pieces of eleton), flint nodules, foreign stones, and pottery. The human remains ere, indeed, so common and prominent – skulls, some of which were ready old by the time of burial, were placed at points in the ditches – that it as proposed that the enclosure had been a place where bodies were posed in order to clean the bones. It was therefore a site for ritual and the ad, whereas the smaller enclosure produced plenty of flint-knapping bris and deer bones, suggesting that it was used for activities associated ith the living.[79] The Sussex sites also all contained human bones – in ntrast with the local long barrows – suggesting that like the main ambledon enclosure they were to some extent concerned with the dead.[80] Windmill Hill, by contrast, dead humans were barely present.



23 Plans of British causewayed enclosures. (a) Briar Hill, Northamptonshire; (b) Robin Hood's ll, Wiltshire; (c) Whitehawk Camp, Sussex; (d) Windmill Hill, Wiltshire; (e) The Trundle, Sussex. drawn after Timothy Darvill.

These large and long-famous monuments can be compared with smaller :amples from further east in England. One that has achieved archaeological lebrity is Etton, near Peterborough, built on what was then an island in the ɔod plain of the River Welland. Francis Pryor oversaw the excavation, and und that it was divided by a fence into east and west halves with their own ıtrances. The eastern one had pottery, tools and animal and human bones terred in pits and ditches, with human skulls at the ditch ends. The western le contained the remains of feasting and woodworking, though human ɔnes were present too, which had been exposed and gnawed by dogs or ɔlves. Dung traces indicated that some livestock had been kept there. The stern half therefore seemed concerned with family ties and the relationship tween life and death, and the western with daily living: so the enclosure as a world in miniature. The wood found at the enclosure had been cut in :e summer or autumn, indicating seasonal gatherings towards the end of e grazing and growing season.[81] The second example consists of a pair of usewayed enclosures discovered in the 2000s by developer-funded

cavations on the Isle of Sheppey in the Thames Estuary. They seem to ve been built one after the other in the century 3700 to 3600 BC, and each as used at most for two generations. One had two or three circuits of ditch, d the other a single one. The latter was made first, for small, apparently dividual, deposits of objects, and the larger one followed, for larger-scale tivity which apparently included feasting. Neither included human burials. ey were dug to face away from each other, commanding different views, rhaps by different communities with contrasting needs, or by the same ople with changing needs, or who used each space for particular purposes seasons.[82]



24 The huge complex around the enclosures on Hambledon Hill, Dorset, redrawn after Roger ercer and Frances Healey.

E = enclosure

B = long barrow

D = dyke

Unsurprisingly, in view of this range of examples, experts currently nsider that the segments of ditch were dug, and consecrated with deposits, define special places into which people could go for special purposes at ecial times. The range of those purposes, however, seems potentially at ast to cover every aspect of Neolithic existence: religious ceremonies ncluding those relating to death), trade, manufacturing, discussion, stock-eeding, feasting and celebration. What is missing is much sign of ntinuous domestic activity.[83] Perhaps these monuments were places where fferent groups could meet and interrelate; it remains a distinct possibility at each segment of ditch was dug by a different one, as its contribution to e common effort. On the other hand, some at least could well have been ade and used by a single set of people. Although the ditches and banks ould have provided slight physical barriers, and the gaps between them forded easy entry, we know so little about Neolithic mentalities that it is ssible that the consecrated ditches represented spiritual defences, which ould slow down and channel attackers and so afford some protection to ople gathered within. As in the case of the tomb-shrines, a basic chitectural idea seems to have been rapidly adapted to a range of local eds.

25 The causewayed enclosure at Knap Hill on Wiltshire’s Marlborough Downs, one of very few which the broken banks still show above the surface.

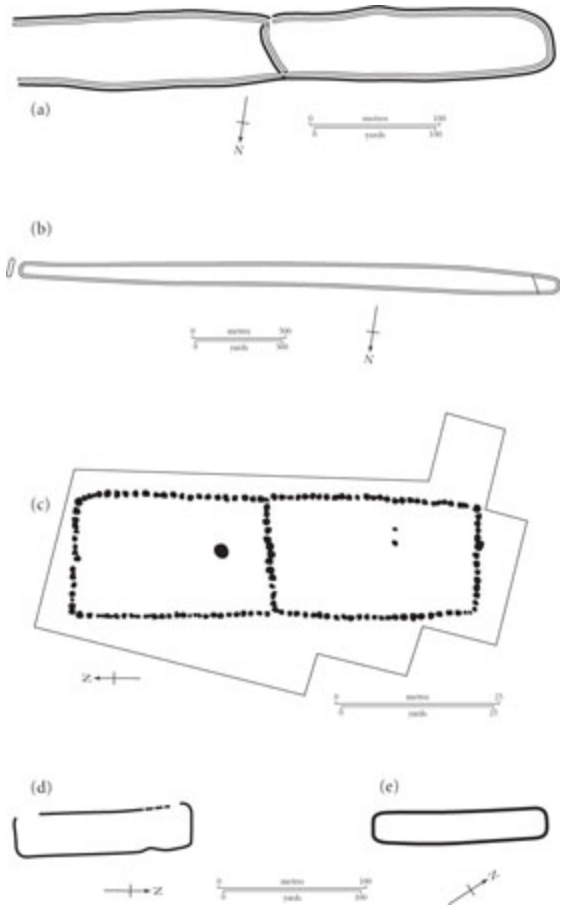
Cursuses and Other Types of Monument

Soon after long barrows and causewayed enclosures were being nstructed across parts of Neolithic Britain, a third major category of onument appeared in much the same regions. It consisted of long, linear ired ditches, which usually joined at their terminals and contained banks rown up from the ditch-earth. Both banks and ditches were small mpared to the area of ground which they enclosed: the shortest were 164 et in length (50 metres), while the longest snaked over the chalk hills of rth-east Dorset for over six miles (almost ten kilometres). This huge nstruction would have needed about half a million hours of work, though average-sized monument of this class could have been dug by a hundred ople in a week. They often cluster in groups, though it is not clear whether e individual structures in these were all in use at once or constructed in a quence. These constructions are called ‘cursuses’, a term coined by the eat antiquary William Stukeley in the early eighteenth century, for the rge one near Stonehenge, because it reminded him of the type of ancient oman racetrack that bears the name cursus. It took almost two hundred ars, however, for it to be applied to a category of structure, this step being ken by O. G. S. Crawford in 1935, after aerial photography had begun to ow up more and more of these lines on the landscape.[84] They make up the rgest class of Neolithic monument: the huge Dorset one is in fact the ggest known Neolithic earthwork in Western Europe, and the largest ristian church of Europe, St Peter’s in Rome, covers only slightly more ound than the smallest cursus. They had no mundane role, having no signs domestic rubbish and no impressive structures inside, so that they seem to ve been made to set a space apart from the landscape around it. Nothing e them has appeared before or since, and they represent the first ecifically British sort of monument, spreading westward into Ireland but herwise marking the point at which the Neolithic of Britain began to verge from that of the Continent. Recent estimates of their possible mber in Britain have come to just over a hundred.[85] Over half are in gland, especially in its eastern and southern parts, with a few in Wales and e rest in Scotland (mostly in the Tay basin and the south-west), where the rsus shape was usually defined by pits or wooden posts rather than rthworks. Some, like the monster in Dorset, seem to have been maintained r centuries, while others, like the smaller of the two near Stonehenge, were

lowed to start disappearing just after they were completed. Disappear they ve, as completely as most causewayed enclosures. The banks of a few of e biggest, such as the Dorset one and the larger near Stonehenge, are still st visible in places, but most have now only a phantom existence, as crop arks visible from the air in the right seasons and weather.[86]

The revised system of dating has not yet been properly applied to rsuses, but a rough sense exists of how they relate chronologically to other onuments. Some of the Scottish timber examples seem to have been arted early, in the first half of the fourth millennium, if they were indeed e same kind of structure as the earthen variety in England. They played the le in Scotland of causewayed enclosures in England. The English cursuses peared around 3550 BC, just as the enclosures were going out of fashion, d were built throughout the second half of the millennium, with the Dorset ant being one of the latest: so they came after the long barrows and usewayed enclosures and were made alongside the last of the former but em largely to have replaced the latter.[87] There is absolutely no agreement their purpose, or purposes. The obvious human activities in a space of at long and comparatively narrow shape are processions or races, but some rsuses cross watercourses or bogs which would have interrupted these. ey may have functioned to honour and celebrate the natural environment, linking parts of it together, or to express human triumph and dominance er it. Some, though not most, incorporate older monuments such as long rrows into their structure: again, this might have been to acknowledge the ople who built these and to draw upon the spiritual power which they bodied, or to slight and deface them, and so deliver an opposite message. ey may not have acted as connecting mechanisms or channels of ovement at all, but as barriers across the land, consecrated buffer zones parating different territories or areas of activity. They could have presented symbolic rivers. Some are apparently aligned on movements of e sun, the central section of the big Dorset one on the midwinter sunset, at at Dorchester on Thames upon the midwinter sunrise, and the larger one ar Stonehenge on the equinoctial sunrise and sunset. Most, however, are t. All would, in the nature of the sky, point towards some groups of stars, t this inevitability in itself rules out much proof of intention. One terpretation, which is just as feasible as the others, turns the concept of

avenly alignment round, by suggesting that cursuses were signalling vices to be read by deities looking down from above. Another is that they ere indeed processional ways, but for the dead and not the living, which ould explain the lack of concern about physical barriers along the route.[88] ne existing evidence does not prioritize any of these suggestions over the hers. They were usually built to harmonize with older structures but not, parently, used as part of a single system with them: for example, the rgest of the five cursuses at Stanwell, Middlesex, now under Heathrow irport, which was over one and a half miles (3.8 kilometres) long, followed nes of Mesolithic pits and earlier Neolithic post holes, and was aligned ith an existing cursus.[89]



26 Cursus monuments. (a) Smaller cursus of two near Stonehenge; (b) The Great Stonehenge sus; (c) timber cursus, Douglasmuir, Scotland; (d) Dorchester-on-Thames cursus, Oxfordshire; (e) unds cursus, Northamptonshire. Redrawn after Timothy Darvill, Alasdair Whittle and Julian omas.

Tomb-shrines, causewayed enclosures and cursuses were the main chitectural forms of the early British Neolithic, all apparently concerned ith ritual and symbolic, rather than straightforwardly functional and actical, behaviour. In addition, however, there were many other types of ucture made in the island during the fourth millennium; and here the hole notion of categories of monument starts to break down. The assification of phenomena into families and types has been one of the sential techniques of modern scientific enquiry – to start to see a pattern in ings is often the first step to understanding them – and this is as true and tural in the discipline of archaeology as in others. By the mid twentieth ntury, however, certain kinds of monument from the British Neolithic ere already emerging as anomalous, and difficult to categorize, and an preciation of this problem has increased in recent years as many new sites ve been revealed by aerial photography or construction work. Large nber structures, for example, have been excavated at three places in otland, along the Dee Valley and in the Central Lowlands, since the year 00, and over a dozen more are suspected from crop marks: two isolated nilar monuments have been found in Oxfordshire and Kent. All those cavated have been dated to the early fourth millennium and interpreted as ofed, rectangular wooden halls, where cereals were stored or consumed. ney have been interpreted as places for ceremonial gathering rather than as uses, and all were burned down, in what have been taken to be ritualized ts of decommissioning.[90] Gordon Noble has pointed out that in all key spects – the timber construction, the rectangular shape and the end in mes – the so-called halls were remarkably similar to other Scottish onuments of the same period or slightly later. These are also found in the owlands, from Aberdeenshire across to Galloway, and comprise the post- fined Scottish cursuses and long enclosures sometimes associated with man remains. Noble has suggested that all were essentially different rieties of the same structure, which used wooden posts to enclose a ctangular private space for special activities, and were dramatically ended, burning, in what could have been a rite which fixed them in memory.[91] It possible that these early Scottish monuments provided the idea for the ter earthwork cursuses of southern Britain (whatever that idea actually as).[92] Down the eastern side of Britain from the Dee Valley to the southern

nglish chalk country, however, other sorts of rectangular wooden structure ere also built in the early to mid fourth millennium, consisting in essence large boxes. More than fifty are known: many contained human remains, d long barrows were sometimes built over them later, so they have nerally been interpreted as timber equivalents of the megalithic tomb-rines. They could, however, also represent just another use of the ctangular timber enclosure, an association strengthened by the fact that ey too were sometimes burned down, while in Scotland the human bones aced inside them had usually been cremated, in a different employment of e transformative effects of fire.[93]

All these kinds of structure were invisible above the ground surface fore excavation, but other kinds of unusual monument have always been ghly visible. Among these was a class defined by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, 1943, as ‘bank barrows’, very long, narrow, rectangular mounds parently all dating to the period between 3600 and 3000 BC. They seem to ve taken centuries to build, being slowly heaped up, sometimes by joining ng barrows together: the largest, at Cleaven Dyke in the Perth and Kinross strict, consisted of a total of thirty-four segments, added together to make a ound about a fifth of a mile (at least 2,085 metres) long. About a dozen are own or suspected, thinly scattered across the range of earthen long rrows and cursuses from central Scotland to the south coast with a rticular concentration in Dorset. At first they were treated by chaeologists as exceptionally extended long barrows, from which they are vided by a purely arbitrary unit of measurement: a long barrow becomes a nk barrow if it is longer than about 430 feet (140 metres). Recently, the ck of burials or other deposits beneath them has caused a reconsideration their role, towards viewing them more as solid forms of cursus onument. As such, they share most of the possible roles of cursuses, with e additional option of providing a raised platform for rites.[94]

In much of Scotland and north-eastern England, and a few areas of the idlands and south, the most common fourth-millennium burial monument as a circular mound, or round barrow. These were made by piling up earth stones, sometimes in careful layers, over a central burial pit, cremation nch or wooden or stone chamber: the later to be built often contained just e to three complete bodies. Hitherto little studied, they may have been yet

other local variation of the tomb-shrine tradition, commencing soon after e long barrows and continuing alongside them.[95] The catalogue of unusual ounds also contains oval barrows, a variant of either long or round barrows und in central southern England. In addition, throughout the fourth illennium people were buried singly or in small groups in simple pits.[96] deed, the careful deposition of a range of objects in pits was a Mesolithic dition that continued, on a larger scale, all through the Neolithic.[97] Jan arding has suggested that to return things to the earth – usually animal mains, pottery and flints – was a way of celebrating and renewing the lationship between the objects, the cosmological forces responsible for eir creation, and human life cycles, as an intrinsic part of everyday actice.[98] Furthermore, monuments could be erected in such a way as to imic the shape of the land around and to complement, and engage with, the rrounding environment. Kirsty Millican, considering ways in which this is ıe of post-defined cursuses and other timber monuments in the Nith Valley south-western Scotland, has pointed out that this makes any strict division tween landscape and monument unwise, so that both together formed a remonial setting.[99]

Certainly, however, the early Neolithic British were flamboyantly pable of changing the earth as much as honouring it. Not only did the ork of stripping it of woodland continue through the millennium – cursus onuments, in particular, would have made no sense in a landscape which d not become largely opened up – but, whatever the purpose of these fferent kinds of monument, they all imposed a dramatically visible human esence on the land. It was being transformed to the eye, on a large scale, d the speed with which varieties of impressive ceremonial structure peared and mutated, all requiring enormous investment of energy, bears stimony to the confidence and exuberance with which Britain's first rmers imposed their identities and beliefs upon it.

Designs on Stone

At the end of the twentieth century, experts in British prehistory became ore conscious of the presence of motifs which were carved or pecked into one monuments and natural rock surfaces. The most common consisted of mple hollows, called cup marks, often with one or more rings made about

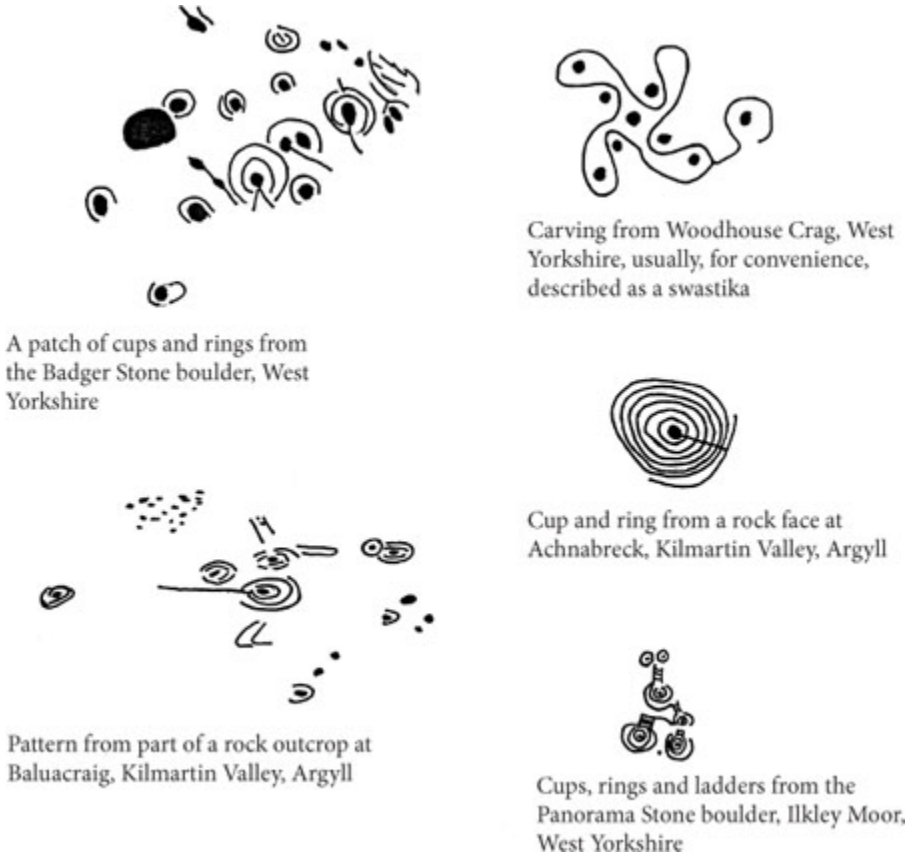
em. Some panels on natural outcrops were much more elaborate, with sette, keyhole, grooved and spiral forms, sometimes interlacing with each her and with the cup-and-ring design. There are distinctive regional styles: ultiple concentric circles in Argyll and Galloway, Scotland, rectangles in orthumberland and rosettes in Northumberland and Yorkshire. Such arkings show up on exposed faces and boulders of stone in certain parts of itain, suddenly glimpsed by the hill walker among heather, bracken, gorse d broom. As they could not be readily dated and there was no apparent eans ever of understanding the meaning of the markings, they were long glected by archaeologists, being vaguely assigned to the Bronze Age. In 96 Richard Bradley could comment that research into them was still garded as 'the open-air equivalent of brass-rubbing'.[100] This vacuum of tention was filled in the later twentieth century by dedicated amateurs, in rticular a solicitor, Ronald Morris, who concentrated on the designs in otland, and a schoolmaster, Stan Beckensall, who surveyed those in rthern England. They carried out the essential preliminary work of cating and cataloguing designs and commencing analysis of the data.[101] uring the 1990s, archaeologists began to take a sustained interest in the enomenon, mainly because of the new importance attached by their scipline to the study of landscapes and symbols. As part of this, the sense the age of the designs began to shift. A Neolithic enclosure at Milfield in orthumberland was shown to be connected by a trackway to a carved tcrop, and as the enclosure was dated to 3800 BC and disappeared from ew relatively quickly, this suggested that the carved designs were as old or en older. Cup marks on fourth-millennium tomb-shrines, which had been sumed to have been added in the Bronze Age, were now reassessed as ntemporary with the monuments. It was noted that the curved arrowheads d pottery designs of that millennium were closer in form to the motifs than e more angular shapes of later Neolithic pottery decoration and tools. By ntrast, it became apparent that none of the designs could securely be dated a Bronze Age context except some on slabs which were reused in funeral onuments and therefore had been decorated at an earlier time. It is rrently agreed, therefore, that the designs are a Neolithic tradition, though ere is less consensus on whether most date to the earlier or later part of the riod, and whether they continued to be made into the Bronze Age.[102]

Traditional peoples all over the world make or have made paintings and rvings on rock, but over 70 per cent of them are hunter-gatherers, to whom is sort of activity seems to come more naturally.[103] It is true that farmers in l periods of European prehistory did produce such designs, especially in :andinavia, Estonia, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Spain. The oblem here is that this Continental work is mostly figurative, creating a ntrast with the abstract motifs which make up the British equivalent. Nor the latter found throughout the island. It is almost confined to the northern lf, with its main concentrations in West and North Yorkshire, County urham, northern Northumberland, the Forth–Clyde region, Galloway, ntral Argyll, and the Tay Valley. Of about eight thousand sites in Britain, er 1,300 are found in Northumberland. In Cumbria, Wales and the English est Country, although there are plenty of suitable rock surfaces, this type decoration is both much rarer and appears mostly on monuments.[104] It ems to occur along natural route-ways and very often in restricted, rderland zones between rich soils on the one side and infertile uplands or e sea on the other. Such decoration clusters in particular, and with unusual aboration, around entrances to valleys and basins, and prominent ewpoints, but is not itself usually positioned to be seen from a distance: ople had to know that it was there. Like monuments, it recognized certain aces as special and made them more so.[105] Almost certainly, it would have ken its place among a much wider making of designs and figures – on es, tents or yurts, wooden structures, clothes and human bodies, and deed on rock surfaces that weather more severely – which have sappeared without trace.[106] Andy Jones has noted that the motifs were rved to take account of natural cracks and veins in the rock surface, which ere effectively treated as pre-existing designs fashioned by non-human nds.[107]

27 Most common repertoire of designs on rock faces in Britain, certainly or probably Neolithic. drawn after Ronald Morris.

In 1979 Ronald Morris could list a total of 104 possible explanations that d already been offered for the designs, and it remains generally recognized at no certain one can ever be reached.[108] None the less, it is possible to ggest plausible ways in which they may have been used. One is that they nveyed information, through a symbolic language, to people moving rough the locations in which they were made: and the British Neolithic estyle seems, as said, to have been a very mobile one. In other words, they ted as signposts, boundary markers and noticeboards. Alternatively, or ditionally, they could have been religious images and altars, or (harking ck to the explanations of Palaeolithic cave designs) the result of visions duced by trance. In historical times, cup-marked stones in Scandinavia ere used for offerings of grain, meat or milk to ancestral and land spirits. places in the Hebrides, Argyll and West Yorkshire, prehistoric designs ere filled with milk in modern times as gifts to the fairies. It would be

onderful if these practices had come directly from ancient times, but this nnot be proved. In the Hawaiian Islands a cup mark is traditionally made mark the birth of a child, while Australian natives still create them to lease a spirit from the stone to bless the surrounding land. Robert Wallis s proposed the exciting theory that the prehistoric British designs were deed messages, but not for humans; instead they may have been made to viewed by beings living below the surface of the land. Just as tools were ten made of 'special' stone, the boulders and faces selected for carving ay already have been regarded as sacred. In general, traditional peoples sewhere in the world tend to make images on rocks for a variety of rposes, undertaken by different groups within the same community, some enly and some secretly. So it may have been in prehistoric Britain.[109]


A patch of cups and rings from the Badger Stone boulder, West Yorkshire
Carving from Woodhouse Crag, West Yorkshire, usually, for convenience, described as a swastika
Cup and ring from a rock face at Achnabreck, Kilmartin Valley, Argyll
Pattern from part of a rock outcrop at Baluacraig, Kilmartin Valley, Argyll
Cups, rings and ladders from the Panorama Stone boulder, Ilkley Moor, West Yorkshire

28 Complex designs on rock faces.

The Great Goddess

Since the 1970s, British archaeologists have, apparently universally, paid attention to the nature of the deities venerated during the Neolithic era of

eir islands, as part of an assumption that nothing can be known about em. For a century before then, however, they were increasingly inclined to edit the period with having venerated, above all other divinities, a single ddess, representing the sustaining and regenerating powers of the earth, ho presided over the religion of the tomb-shrines. The story of the rise and cline of scholarly belief in this religion is one which certainly provides portant insights into the nature of modernity, whether or not it tells us ything about the nature of the New Stone Age.[110]

This goddess appeared in the minds of poets before she did in that of holars, as one aspect of the Romantic Movement, that great rebellion gainst an excess of civilization, rationalism, urbanization and dustrialization which swept Europe in the decades around 1800. As part of is, creative writers, especially in Britain which was most affected by the st two processes, lost much of their traditional interest in the classical reek and Roman pagan goddesses, who were mostly patronesses of human mmunities and activities. Instead, they personified the divine feminine creasingly in terms of the natural world, and commonly with broad and mple labels such as ‘Mother Nature’ and ‘Mother Earth’ rather than any of e specific classical deity names. This newly popular nature goddess was entified especially with the moon and with wild, green and growing things. s such, she was celebrated in English by John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, harlotte Brontë, Robert Browning and Algernon Charles Swinburne, to me only the most prominent. The appearance of this figure as a major erary motif ran parallel to an emerging theme of German Romantic ought: that very ancient human beings, being closer to the fount of eation, had been possessed of sublime truths concerning the nature of the smos which had degenerated or been forgotten by subsequent peoples. he biblical roots of this idea should be obvious, as well as the assumption the same thinkers, such as Johann Herder and Johan Ludwig Tieck, that ne of those sublime truths had to be monotheism. It is not surprising, erefore, that in 1849 another German intellectual, Edouard Gerhard, pothesized that behind all the various goddesses of ancient Greece stood a ngle great one, who had originally subsumed all of them within her being.

As the nineteenth century progressed, other German classicists, and me in France, took up the idea and began to apply it to prehistoric

cations: in particular, when female figurines began to emerge in significant ımbers on Neolithic sites in Greece and the Balkans, these were sometimes terpreted as images of this presumed deity. By the end of the century it as starting to be embraced by some in Britain, of whom the most important as Sir Arthur Evans, the discoverer of the Minoan civilization of Bronze ge Crete. In 1901 he published the idea that the main deity of that vilization had been the Great Goddess, and continued to develop it ereafter. At the same time the concept of the goddess began to merge with different nineteenth-century theory, first fully articulated by J. J. Bachofen 1862: that the earliest human societies had been woman-centred, altering a patriarchal form before the beginning of history. The union of the two eas in Britain was made most prominently in 1903 by the Cambridge assicist Jane Ellen Harrison, who posited the existence of a peaceful and tensely creative woman-centred Greek civilization in prehistory, in which ımans, living in harmony with the natural world and each other, had orshipped a single female deity, representing the earth. This happy state of fairs, she suggested, had been destroyed by invaders from the north, who d brought male rule, warfare and dominant male deities.

Thereafter the idea of the universal ancient goddess grew still stronger nong experts in the prehistory of south-eastern Europe and the Near East. 1929 one of them in Britain, G. D. Hornblower, gave it an important ojection by proposing that the so-called ‘Venus’ figurines of the ılaeolithic had also been images of that deity, pushing her worship back to e earliest human settlement of Europe. In the same period, anthropologists ok up the image and incorporated it into their own work, claiming to detect lief in a Mother Earth in all traditional human societies; a theory first fully ticulated by the German scholar Albrecht Dieterich in 1905.[111] At the me time, the literary invocation of Mother Nature, the Great Mother, the ırth Mother or the Mother Goddess remained as powerful as ever, having ow as great a presence in prose as in poetry and featuring prominently in e work of such authors as D. H. Lawrence, H. J. Massingham and Robert raves, while Rudyard Kipling wrote of a priestess-centred prehistoric itish religion. As the leading late twentieth-century scholar of comparative ligion Mircea Eliade was to note, by the early twentieth century a ‘search

r the Mother’ had become a major component of the ‘unconscious
stalgias of the Western intellectual’.[112]

Experts in the British Neolithic, however, reserved judgement, largely
cause their sites lacked the figurines which were the main pieces of
idence for a goddess-centred religion at the other end of Europe. The
rrier appeared to be removed in 1939, when A. L. Armstrong claimed to
ve found unequivocal proof of such a religion at the bottom of one of the
nt mines called Grimes Graves, in the Norfolk Breckland. He announced
e discovery there of an altar, with a bowl for offerings before it and a crude
male figurine, carved of chalk, seated upon it. From that moment onwards,
e statuette appeared in books on the British Neolithic, interpreted as a
ddess. Rumours circulated among archaeologists that it was a fake, but
ch was the discretion of their community that not until 1986 did one of
em, Stuart Piggott, print the possibility. In 1991 Gillian Varndell examined
e case and found that Armstrong had never recorded the discovery in his
e notebook and had ordered all other experienced excavators to leave the
cation on the day on which it was made. The figurine and bowl looked
spiciously freshly carved, and Varndell concluded that they could no
nger be accepted on face value as Neolithic. At the time, however, they
moved from some writers on British prehistory the restraint previously
own regarding acceptance of the religion of the Great Goddess in Western
rope. The most prolific and enthusiastic of these was Jacquetta Hawkes,
ho developed further Jane Ellen Harrison’s view of a peaceful, woman-
ntred, goddess-worshipping early Europe. In her opinion the early
eolithic tomb-shrines had been the temples of the goddess, brought to the
lantic coasts of Europe as part of her worship by missionaries from the
ear East. To her way of thinking this admirable religion and society had
en eradicated by the Indo-Europeans, warriors from the East who had
troduced a male-centred society and the worship of sky gods, and ushered
the Bronze Age. She was, however, only the most passionate and populist
emplar of a broad trend. Whether or not there was ever an ‘Age of the
ddess’ in Neolithic Europe, there certainly was one among European
tellectuals in the mid twentieth century. Between 1954 and 1958 three
ants of British archaeology, O. G. S. Crawford, Gordon Childe and Glyn
aniel, all declared their belief in the veneration of a single female deity by

eolithic cultures all across Europe and the Near East. Specialists in the story and theory of religion now took this belief as proven fact, as did ychologists, above all Erich Neumann, who proclaimed that such a figure as embedded in the human subconscious.

Leaving aside the possibility of divine revelation, which a historian can ither confirm nor disprove, there are fairly clear reasons why such a figure ould have strongly appealed to the modern Western imagination. It served o very different purposes. One was to bring the divine feminine strongly ck into the consciousness of Western intellectuals, as part of the de-ristianization of society and as a balance to the male-centred nature of aditional public and religious life. The fact that the image of the prehistoric eat goddess corresponded quite closely to a biblical model, as that of a gle and universal primeval deity, the worship of whom later shattered into storical polytheism, would have made it easier to absorb. The figure of the ture goddess of the earth and night sky had appeared as part of a ovement which questioned some of the basic traditional assumptions of estern civilization and represented a major shift of consciousness. On the her hand, whereas certain writers, like Harrison and Hawkes, portrayed the orld of goddess-worship as a superior one to later prehistory, others, who cluded Neumann, suggested that the move from it to worship of male ities had been a sign of human progress. Moreover the image of the eolithic Great Goddess, concerned with fertility, maternity, earth and ture, propagated a limited and restrictive set of associations for female entities, and could be as readily used to disseminate traditional gender les as to question them.

It is not uncommon for ideas to achieve this kind of apogee before a fall, d so it was in this case: belief in the Neolithic goddess began to wane nong specialists in the period from the mid 1960s, and within ten years it as more or less gone. Specific attacks on aspects of it were published by ter Ucko and Andrew Fleming, both, significantly, young scholars just mmencing their careers, but in themselves these were not sufficient to ve caused the change. The willingness to believe simply ebbed away, and, one of the rising generation involved in British archaeology at that time, I yself can testify to some of the developments behind the change. One was at great questioning of traditional assumptions that was a feature of the

ne: directed against the construct of the Great Goddess, this revealed that ere was in fact no solid evidence for it, only data which might possibly be terpreted to support it. With the tide of archaeological thought running ongly towards social and economic models, the construct seemed old-shioned as well as unnecessary. Furthermore, the discipline of thropology was making a major impact on archaeological theory, and the onotheistic goddess religion posited by the theory bore little resemblance the very complex spirit worlds, teeming with different entities, which rmed the belief systems of actual traditional peoples studied by scholars. stead the concept of a faith focused on a single benevolent deity, preached missionaries from the Near East, began to look very much like a ojection from Christian models, at the same time as the new dates for the estern European Neolithic proved that its monuments could not have been pied from the presumed Eastern models after all.

To British liberals, socialists and feminists, moreover, an image of a male deity which emphasized motherhood, nurturing and nature over telligence, ambition and vocational skills did not seem an empowering one r women. By contrast, anthropologists were shaking up received concepts gender, let alone gender roles, so that by 1975 one of them, Shirley rdener, could ask whether our very categories of ‘women’ and ‘men’ might t be cultural constructs that would one day disappear. At the same time, her anthropologists were questioning the earlier assertion, within their scipline, that the belief in a Mother Earth was universal among traditional oples. In 1966 a Continental scholar, Olaf Petterson, launched a general tack upon it, followed by specific deconstructions based on particular parts the world.[113] Samuel Gill suggested that where such a figure featured in counts of Native American mythology she had been imposed on them by e European and European American authors, while Tony Swain declared at European scholars had done the same thing for native Australian dition.[114]

To many British prehistorians, therefore, it came as a shock when the old nage and the old framework around it were reintroduced from the United ates in the years around 1980, if in a newly radicalized guise. American riters such as Mary Daly, Susan Griffin and Adrienne Rich had taken up e traditional, conservative idea of an essential female nature, and simply

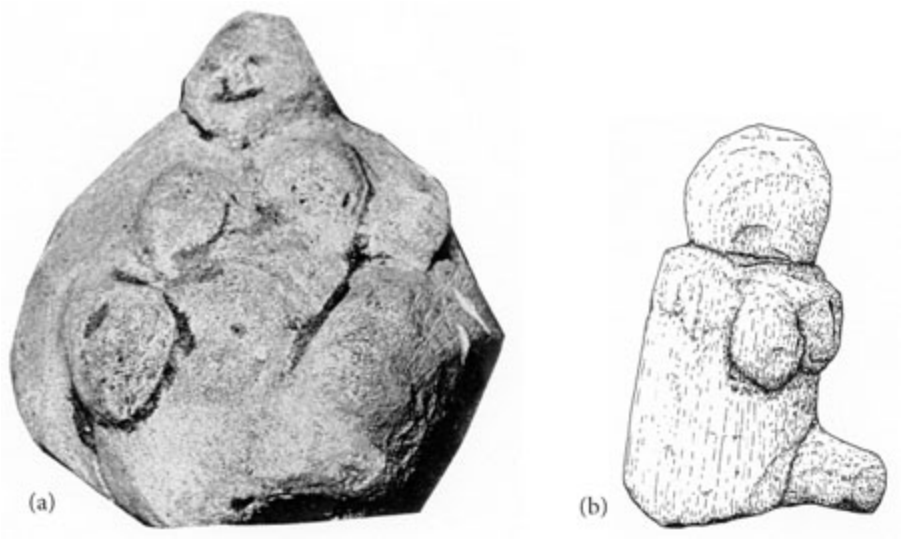
versed the sympathies, attaching a positive value to those qualities which e traditional language had defined as negative. British liberals had dealt ith an inconvenient old idea by deconstructing it, while the Americans had ne so by reversing it. Both responses are excellent strategies in their own ght: but unfortunately completely incompatible with each other. One result the USA was the Goddess Movement, a modern religion devoted to unteracting the perceived ill effects of centuries of male domination of estern society by reasserting the divine feminine, usually embodied rectly or ultimately in a single great deity identified with the natural world. most distinguished convert among archaeologists was Marija Gimbutas, e foremost American expert in Eastern European prehistory, who blished a series of popular books between 1982 and 1991 which asserted the arguments of authors such as Jane Ellen Harrison, Jacquetta awkes and Erich Neumann in updated form. Like them, she envisaged a oman-centred Neolithic Europe, devoted to a single goddess, but moulded the latter to stress creativeness and universal capability rather an maternity and fertility. Although the epicentre of the Goddess ovement remained in the United States, and indeed it could be viewed as a oduct of the American evangelical tradition, it found some adherents in rope, including Britain, who reproduced its emphasis on the Neolithic as a minist golden age, in society as in religion.[115]

One effect of the Goddess Movement, especially as reflected in the work Marija Gimbutas, was to make archaeologists in the 1990s look explicitly d systematically at the evidence for the veneration of a single great deity the Neolithic. The result was generally to confirm the impression that had en gained implicitly two decades before: that it could not be proved, cause the data could be interpreted in other ways. One by one, centres of eolithic and Bronze Age culture that had been prominent in the works of thors who had propounded the concept of the goddess were examined and is conclusion was drawn: for Turkey (and above all the remarkable eolithic urban site of Çatalhöyük), Greece and the Balkans (the epicentre Marija Gimbutas's archaeological work), the Aegean Islands, Cyprus, ete, Malta, Spain, Portugal and France.[116] The very concept of a ehistoric great goddess was considered anew and problems found with [117] In Britain the record looks particularly bare, because of the almost

mplete absence, among Neolithic objects and images, of gendered human-
e forms. Now that the Grimes Graves figurine is removed from the bank
reliable data, as discussed above, the clearest example of one is a block of
od found beneath a portion of a wooden trackway across the Somerset
vels. It is roughly carved into the form of a hermaphrodite, having a head,
o large breasts and a huge erect penis (the suggestion that this member is a
maining leg seems to be refuted by the lack of any mark where another
nb was broken away). It is dated to a period around 3800 BC, and the
ading experts on the archaeology of the Levels, Bryony and John Coles,
ncluded that it might have been a toy, a piece of gross humour or a potent
ual object deposited beneath the track to strengthen it.[118] It would perhaps
a little easier to distinguish between these options if we knew what the
ised wooden way, known as the Sweet Track, was actually for: whether a
actical means of crossing wetland, or a corridor into a spiritual otherworld,
be walked on vision quests or to worship water spirits.[119]

Two aspects of this poverty of evidence should perhaps be highlighted.
e first is that it is virtually certain that Neolithic Europeans venerated
ddesses, or at least powerful female spirits, because traditional peoples
ways do. The worship of such beings is well established, everywhere, as
on as each area of Europe and the Near East emerges into history: and
ey are generally potent figures in their own right rather than being
bservient to gods. The problem is with the concept of a single great
ddess, venerated across the whole region. The whole tendency of religious
velopment in the recorded history of the ancient world is that of a
imeval situation in which a very large amount of local deities coexist,
hich later become reduced in number by identification with each other and
mbination into pantheons. For Sumer during the early third millennium
, the earliest recorded civilization of Mesopotamia and one contemporary
th part of the British Neolithic but possessed of written texts, about four
ousand deities can be identified. Only in later millennia, and by
cceeding imperial states, were they brought into a single system, and
ouped or blended into a family or polity.[120] Eventually, late in pagan
tiquity, first some philosophers and then some worshippers were able to
nceive of an essential unity of the divine. The concept of a profoundly
od primeval religion, centred on a single great deity, which degenerated

ver time into a polytheism associated with a much worse kind of human haviour, is a Judaeo-Christian one with no support from the historic or chaeological record. None the less, it is not decisively negated by the idence of prehistory either. This introduces the second point: that just as e Goddess Movement is a perfectly viable modern religion, so it is still ssible to interpret the data from any part of Neolithic Europe as nformable with the worship of a (or the) great goddess. It remains an ceptable reading of the record, though now one among many others.[121]



29 Neolithic British figurines actual and reputed. (a) Grimes Graves chalk ‘goddess’; (b) carved oden figure from the Sweet Track, Somerset Levels. The former is drawn from life, the latter rawn after Bryony and John Coles.

30 Carved pieces of chalk from British Neolithic sites. (a) probable phallus from Thickthorn ng Barrow; (b) possible figurine from Maiden Castle, Dorset.

Warfare

In the present state of the evidence, and probably that of most states to me, we know nothing certain about the social and political structures and nder relations of the British Neolithic, any more than we can of its ligious beliefs. Modern people are therefore able to imagine those in many fferent forms, according to their own beliefs, values, dreams and ideals. hat cannot be imagined, however, is that this era was peaceful. To nceive of it as such has been, in fact, a relatively recent development, for e Victorian pioneers of modern archaeology mainly saw it as a period of vagery and bloodshed: in the writings of the two most influential of all, Sir hn Lubbock and Sir William Boyd Dawkins, it is more or less a chamber horrors.[122] Where the great scholars led, creative writers followed, such the essayist Grant Allen, who considered the disarticulated human bones und in the chamber of a Cotswold–Severn long barrow and imagined them be the refuse of rites of human sacrifice and cannibalism, enacted to nour a chieftain interred among them.[123] In part such hostile attitudes

ere based on the premise that people who seemed primitive in technology ust also be debased in morality. They also, however, drew directly and avily on accounts of traditional peoples in the tropical world, produced by e spreading forces of European imperialism and evangelism and often bject to distortion and exaggeration in the reporting. The same sources derpinned the attitudes of the founder of the discipline of anthropology in itain, Sir Edward Tylor, who portrayed indigenous cultures elsewhere in e world as being given to hideous rites, which he attributed also to the rly British.[124] Such a view largely died away in the course of the twentieth ntury, with the waning of the missionary and supremacist spirit that had oduced it, and a growing respect for native peoples. By the end of the ntury, virtually every piece of data that the Victorians had interpreted as idence of atrocity was viewed benignly: the human bones mixed together the long barrows as the results of a social view which erased the dividual to glorify the community, and honoured ancestors; the presence of ore skeletal material on ceremonial sites as part of a package of deposits tended to venerate all aspects of life; and the similar treatment of the bones people and animals in such contexts as proof of the harmony in which the cieties of the time lived with the natural world.[125]

A concomitant of this set of attitudes was a strong tendency among storians of war, especially the Americans Quincy Wright and Harry rney, to emphasize the ritualized and limited nature of conflict in rimitive' societies. They held that wars were fought for prestige and social lidarity, not for gain or power, and so avoided casualties and stressed dividual combat in such a way as to turn military action into a sport or a rm of gesture politics rather than a means to conquest and bloodshed. As a sult, most textbooks of archaeology published across the Western world in e 1980s made no reference to warfare.[126] It is difficult to uncouple this velopment from the complete cessation of conflict between states roughout the Western world in the second half of the twentieth century, d the relative demilitarization of its societies: people living in this new ndition wanted to have a nicer prehistory, or at least earlier prehistory, in hich war was no longer seen as natural. A challenge developed in the 90s, most prominently made by two other Americans, Laurence Keeley d Raymond Kelly. They conducted systematic studies of the by then

nsiderable amount of anthropological data for societies which had mained at a stage of development before the evolution of a state structure, d found war to be very frequent among them: in one sample of fifty, forty-ve often engaged in it, while in another sample of ninety, seventy-eight did. ne exceptions tended to be living under the jurisdiction of modern states, or isolation from other humans. Of the tribes of western North America at ne of first study by Europeans, 86 per cent had made war more than once nually: a higher rate than the ancient Roman republic. There was no idence that battles between peoples who had no state apparatus were oportionately less lethal than those between peoples who had one. Indeed, was much rarer for the former to take male prisoners than the latter, which d a stronger interest in acquiring new subjects. The most peaceful peoples ere those who lived in low numbers in a region of generously distributed tural resources: but they tended to have above average homicide rates, so at violence among them was often simply expressed in a different form.[127]

It seems doubtful whether warfare would have existed in the European laeolithic, as the small, highly mobile groups roaming the rich hunting ounds of the time would not seem to have had much occasion for it. On e other hand, the areas of France and Spain that have produced the famous ve pictures may have held much denser and more settled populations; and deed the paintings and carvings could have been one expression of rivalry nong them. One French cave, at Cougnac, has two apparent portrayals of man bodies pierced by many spears, and one in Italy held the body of a ild with an apparent projectile wound; but it has been acknowledged that ese may be manifestations of violence between individuals.[128] It may be ded here that the pictures could also have other meanings, for example owing a shaman in trance with rays of spiritual power radiating from the dy. The Mesolithic looks different. The world's first known war grave is Jebel Sahaba in the Sudan, dated to between 12,000 and 10,000 BC and ntaining fifty-nine people, 40.7 per cent of whom had clearly suffered olent death, most by flint projectiles, probably arrowheads.[129] In European rms, this was a Mesolithic society, and indeed the cemeteries of the ntinental European Mesolithic contain many examples of individuals who d sustained violent injuries to their bones. A Bavarian cave has disclosed a llection of severed heads, about half bludgeoned to death, from the period.

the Neolithic the Continental evidence apparently becomes yet more amatic, with more damage to bodies as well as mass graves and rtifications.[130] No attempt is made here to determine whether such terpretations of the evidence are in fact correct: recognition is simply made at this is how some experts – apparently at present without much position – have viewed it.

In Britain, most attention has been focused on two causewayed closures, at Hambledon Hill, and at Crickley Hill on the Cotswold Scarp Gloucestershire, and on a stone enclosure on Carn Brea, a dramatic hill in e west of Cornwall. At the first two, systems of timber palisades with teways, apparently fortresses, had been built in the later fourth illennium. That at Hambledon was burned down at least three times tween 3700 and 3300 BC, and two male skeletons were found in the tches with arrowheads at their throats. At Crickley Hill, over 400 rowheads littered the perimeter, apparently the product of two attacks, the st of which had ended in a massive strengthening of the defences and the cond in their complete abandonment. The wall at Carn Brea had been nstructed to a height of six feet (180 centimetres) in about 3700 BC to otect a settlement inside, established near a good source of stone for tools. ger Mercer's excavations found a total of 751 arrowheads stuck in it and the ground inside, while the houses had been destroyed by fire. Another usewayed enclosure, at Maiden Castle on a chalk hill in Dorset, had emingly also been attacked by archers, as there was a concentration of oken arrowheads in one ditch. An enclosure built to protect a promontory Hembury in Devon had been burned, and at least 120 arrowheads were ustered around a gateway.[131]

Recently a study of 350 Early Neolithic skull-caps, mostly from southern itain, has revealed that at least 7.4 per cent show evidence of serious juries, made by heavy blows.[132] As most war wounds would have injured ft tissue and left no trace on skeletons, this is quite a significant figure. In 6 cases arrowheads have been found among the remains of British Early eolithic burials, and may well have been the cause of death: in five this le was certain, because they were actually sticking into the bones.[133] Some ng barrows yielded more concentrated evidence of violence. At Boles

arrow on the edge of Wiltshire's central chalk plateau, many of the bones d suffered traumatic injuries compatible with axe blows.[134] At Wayland's nithy on the Berkshire Downs, several men seemed to have died 'in a orm of arrow shot'.[135] The weapons that fired these projectiles had the me length as a medieval longbow and could hit a target over 100 yards 00 metres) away. The bone assemblages from British Neolithic sites do not ggest a hunting of large wild animals regular enough to warrant such werful equipment: their most obvious use is in warfare, and the heavy af-shaped arrows that they shot are of a remarkably uniform design and are und commonly all over the British Isles.[136] It is important not to aggerate the significance of all this evidence: most causewayed enclosures ow no sign of violence, nor do most of the bones from tomb-shrines. None e less, there actually seem to be more signs of active warfare in the Early eolithic than in any other period of British prehistory.[137] This is perhaps t very surprising, as the economy of the time was apparently centred on ttle and sheep, highly mobile forms of wealth which are particularly lnerable to raiding. Among the handful of societies in the anthropological cord that did not practise war, none had a pastoral way of life.

This has some implications for views of British Neolithic ritual actices. Societies that practise warfare regularly tend to ritualize it to a nsiderable extent and integrate it into their religious traditions, especially matters such as victory celebration, launching of expeditions, trophy-king and the treatment of prisoners. It may be that we need to reconsider me of the familiar evidence from sites of the period. Miles Russell has ggested that the human bones put into long barrows could have come from man sacrifices, selected from captives, slaves or superfluous members of e community.[138] Rick Schulting and Michael Wysocki have raised the ssibility that the bones gnawed or pecked by animals, found in some of e barrows, had actually been retrieved from battlefields, and represent her the heroic dead of the community or vanquished enemies. They have rther asked whether the skeletal material found in the ditches of usewayed enclosures, such as the weathered skulls at Hambledon Hill, ight not have been military trophies rather than the remains of venerated cestors.[139] It is perhaps time to look again at other aspects of the period, ch as the number of timber monuments destroyed by fire in Scotland and

rts of eastern England. What was going on there may well have been a rite closure; but it could also have been straightforward enemy action. There no need to make a full circle back to the Victorian portrait of savagery, but there is truly to be a just and impartial consideration of the nature of Early eolithic ritual and religion, then the range of plausible speculation must w readmit the possibility that some of it was bloodthirsty.

3

THE LATE NEOLITHIC AND EARLY BRONZE AGE

THE TIME OF THE SACRED CIRCLE

IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT senses, the transition from the fourth to the third illennium, and from the Early to the Late Neolithic, was one of continuity, e abiding characteristics including an economy based on progressive earance of woodland and a reliance on herding livestock across much of ainland Britain; a more or less mobile lifestyle across the same range, with tle evidence of permanent settlement; a technology centred on the use of one and flint which made the bow its main weapon and the axe its main ol; and an appetite for the construction of ceremonial monuments which mained as strong as before. The nature of those monuments, however, derwent a profound alteration throughout the southern and eastern parts of e island. Most of the favourite forms of the fourth millennium – long rrows, causewayed enclosures and cursuses – ceased to be built, and in ost cases apparently to be used, by 3000 BC. Instead new types of remonial enclosure appeared, followed by new settings for the burial of man remains, which had in common a general taste for the circle as the sic unit of shape.

Round monuments had been built in the Early Neolithic, but were, as ted, outnumbered by rectangular and trapezoid forms. Now they became e norm across most of Britain. In the rest of the island, and its offshore es to west and north, and in Ireland, the old forms persisted, but even there rcularity became a prominent feature, as they were developed to a new ogee of size and sophistication. In many ways the circle is one of the great imal units of nature: it reflects the horizon, the sun and moon, the cycle of asons and the concept of eternity. It is also the simplest geometrical shape lay out, and the most economical, in terms of the ratio between length of rimeter and area enclosed.[1] It can be one of the most democratic of

onumental forms, if all people present are positioned at equal spaces ound it, and one of the most hierarchical, if a special person or persons cupy the central point. This shift is the most obvious alteration in onumentality that distinguishes the two millennia from each other, and the o divisions of the New Stone Age. The Late Neolithic in Britain, however ckoned by individual archaeologists, was shorter than the earlier part, as ound 2500 BC a copper-based technology entered the island; by the end of e millennium it had developed into a dominant bronze-based one.[2] This ade very little difference to ritual behaviour: whereas the advent of the eolithic had brought about a profound change in the British ceremonial ndscape, thereafter alterations in material culture and expressions of irituality were largely uncoupled from each other. For anybody interested ancient religious behaviour, the distinction between the New Stone Age, onze Age and Iron Age, so handy at a time before the advent of diocarbon dating when the relative age of sites could only really be judged artefacts, is now more or less irrelevant in Britain. It survives mainly cause of a wholly understandable intellectual inertia, but may also do so cause the primacy of technological development as an index of progress in e human story, so dear to nineteenth-century writers, still retains much tency today.

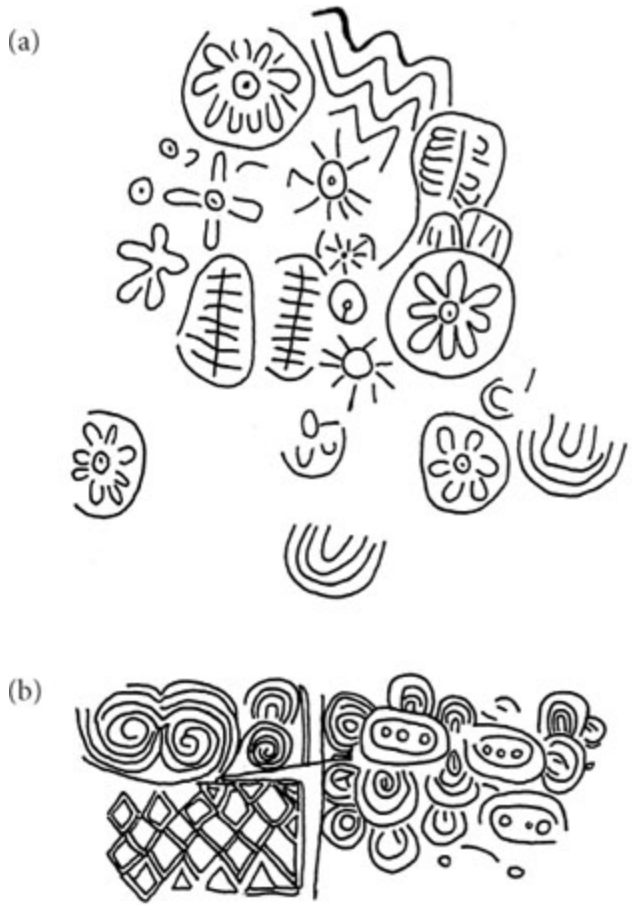
Developed Passage Graves

In Ireland, the new concentration on the circle was married to the older dition of the tomb-shrine, and produced the most magnificent expression the latter in a style of monument commonly known to archaeologists as e developed passage grave, or passage tomb. This consists of a large round ound, entered by a long passage of megaliths leading to a stone-built amber, usually with side cells or recesses. It was a natural elaboration of a pe of tomb-shrine common in Western Europe in the fourth millennium, hich had embodied a smaller and simpler combination of the same mponents: the round mound, the passage and the chamber. What stinguished the developed version, in addition to sheer size and ultiplication of chambers, was the frequent presence of carved or pecked signs on the stones and the fairly common one of alignment of the ssages on the rising or setting of the sun at midsummer and midwinter.

ıe finest examples are now the most celebrated of Irish prehistoric onuments, especially the three in the bend of the River Boyne west of rogheda: the huge mounds and superb chambers of Newgrange, Knowth d Dowth, constructed around 3300 to 3200 BC.[3]

The famous Boyne Valley passage graves also have the largest number decorated stones, the 250 surviving at Knowth representing almost half of ose found at such monuments in Ireland, and over a quarter of those found them in Western Europe. Altogether, the designs concerned include about 0 different motifs, of which the most common are circles, dots, cup marks, -shapes, spirals, radials, parallel lines, chevrons, zigzags, lozenges and angles. Ireland has the greatest variety of them as well as the greatest ıantity, and although a few of the designs overlap with those found in the mb-shrines of France, Spain and Portugal, most do not. Nor do they have uch in common with those carved or pecked into natural rock faces, which ıd not to occur in the same areas and apparently have a much broader ıronological range, spanning the Neolithic instead of, as in the passage ave art, concentrating in the centuries around 3000 BC.[4] In the mid 1990s, llowing the interpretation of Palaeolithic cave designs in terms of altered ıtes of consciousness associated with shamanic rites, Jeremy Dronfield oposed a similar explanation for those in the tomb-shrines, as induced ther by hallucinogenic drugs or conditions of trance. A parallel debate ısued to that over the Palaeolithic, with an equally indeterminate result.[5] chard Bradley has argued more recently that there is no single style of ssage grave decoration, and so there cannot be a single sort of experience hind it, as even motifs which are common between regions are used in fferent ways at different sites. He has emphasized instead the dramatic nsory experience of entering a passage grave as warmth and light ebb vay and those walking towards the chamber encounter the designs quentially and in single file.[6] Doubtless an altered state of consciousness ɔuld enhance the effect, but would not have been necessary to appreciate How people would have qualified for it – whether it was open to all who ished, or to people chosen in turn, or confined to a political or religious ite – we simply cannot tell.

The western side of Wales had belonged, since the Neolithic began, to a ltural province which spanned both sides of the Irish Sea, and its tomb-rines had similarities to those in Ireland. It is not surprising, therefore, that e developed passage grave crossed the water, to the important offshore and of Anglesey which was already thickly set with tomb-shrines, to oduce the finest Welsh examples of the tradition. It is possible that another as constructed further east, on the shores of the Mersey in what is now ncashire, which included the six decorated stones now preserved in alderstones Park, Liverpool. These bear the most complex carved egalithic designs in Europe, with concentric circles, grooves, lines and irals, arcs, cups, footprints and a wheel.[7] They, however, have no certain ovenance and may have been taken from a rock outcrop, so at present ere are no certain examples of the developed passage grave on mainland itain. The Welsh representatives are the two in Anglesey: Bryn Celli Ddu, ting in a field behind a farmyard within the island, and Barclodiad y awres, at the end of a promontory jutting out from the western coast. Both ve been much reconstructed in modern times, after excavation, and are pt open to the public by Cadw, the Welsh heritage conservation body.



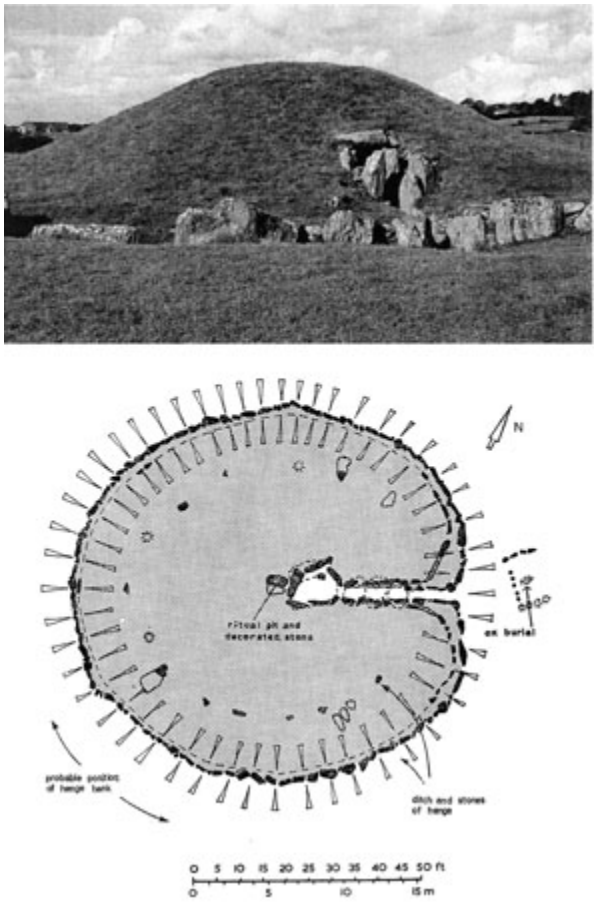
31 Classic designs from Irish developed passage graves, drawn from life:

(a) in the rear of the chamber of Cairn T at Loughcrew, County Meath;

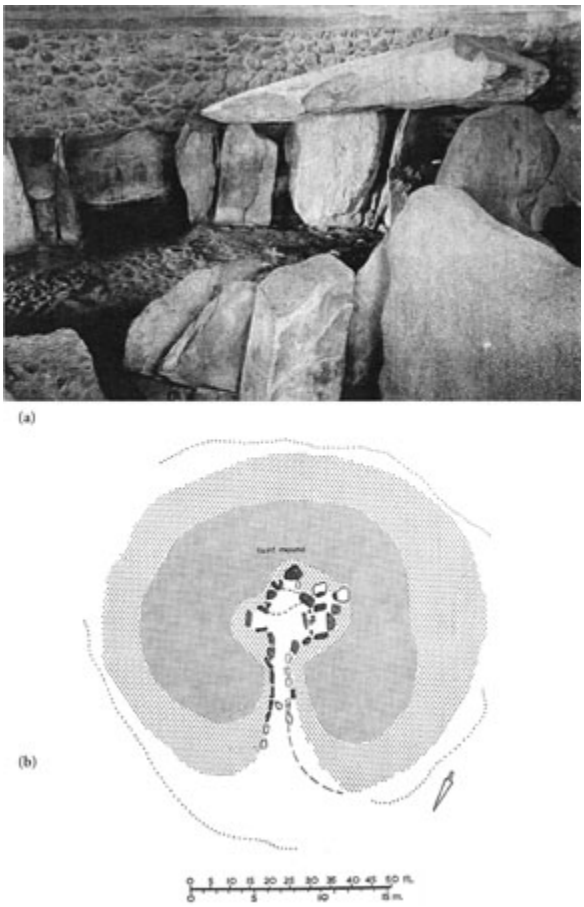
(b) on kerbstone 52 at Newgrange, in the same county.

Bryn Celli Ddu was a large circular cairn of stones covering a passage 27 et (over 8 metres) long, leading to a central, polygonal chamber. This had a all spiral carved into one upright, visible only by artificial light, while a egalith with an elaborate serpentine design was put face-down over a pit in e centre of the site before the monument was constructed over it. The ssage points at the midsummer sunrise, which lights up a quartz-rich onolith at the back of the chamber.[8] Barclodiad y Gawres (meaning 'the ron-ful of the giantess' in reference to a local legend) had a mound mainly mposed of earth, with turf – carefully taken from marshy ground – piled er it; as in the case of many tomb-shrines, including the Boyne passage aves, the covering structure was made up of materials brought from more an one location. The mound was 90 feet (27 metres) across and a passage

3 feet (7 metres) long led into it, to a cross-shaped chamber with three naller cells opening off. It lacks an apparent orientation on the sun, but has ore decorations: concentric circles, chevrons, lozenges, zigzags and spirals pear on seven of the stones. The burial mode at both of the Anglesey ssage graves was cremation, as it was in the Boyne Valley, but the central ea of the Barclodiad y Gawres chamber had been used for a much more igmatic rite, in which a fire had been quenched with a ‘stew’ containing g, toad, snake, mouse, eel, and two types of small fish.[9] At both onuments, fires had been burned in the passages and chambers, which ould have lit them up and shown the carvings.[10] The two are perhaps the ost sophisticated and elaborate Neolithic structures in the whole of Wales.


N
ritual pit and decorated stone
ex burial
probable position of hengi bank
ditch and stones of hengi
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 ft
0 5 10 15 m

32 Bryn Celli Ddu developed passage grave: exterior and plan. The plan is redrawn after T. G. E. well *et al.*



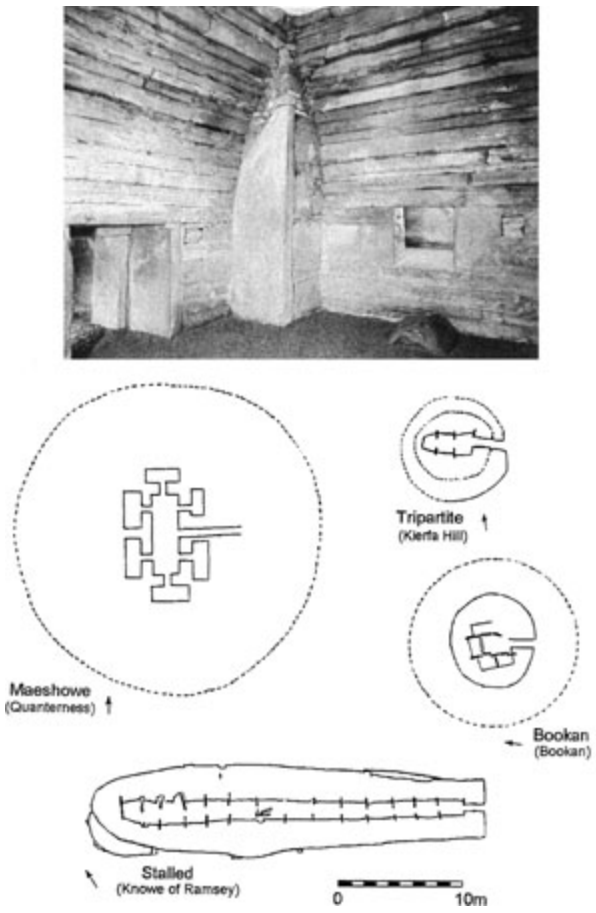
33 Barclodiad y Gawres developed passage grave: interior and plan. The plan is redrawn after T. E. Powell *et al.* One of the decorated stones can faintly be seen in the left-hand upper portion of the ɔtograph.

That honour among Scottish monuments is commonly given to the finest ɨpression of the developed passage grave tradition there, Maes Howe in the ɾkney Islands to the north of the British mainland. The islands concerned ɛre exceptionally well fashioned by nature to provide settings for onumental construction in the period, being composed of sandstone rock hich weathers to fertile soil, supporting a large human population, and also lits easily into slabs perfect for use as megaliths. The building of tomb-rines there began intensively in the middle of the fourth millennium, until ɔout eighty were constructed across the archipelago. They seem to fall into ʏo main varieties. One is the ‘stalled cairn’, a long, rectangular chamber, bdivided by upright slabs into separate stalls and set in a rectangular or und mound of piled stones. The other is the local development of the ɨveloped passage grave, having the central chamber of the type, entered by

long passage from the side of a circular mound, and usually with cells pening off the chamber. This second kind is much rarer, known from ten to velve examples. Both seem to have become larger over time, Maes Howe, uilt in the early third millennium BC, being the largest and most beautifully rmed of the passage graves. It is set, appropriately, in the centre of the ggest island, Orkney Mainland.

Maes Howe shows several features that indicate direct inspiration by the ghtly older Boyne Valley monuments. One is the sheer scale: the grassed-er, dome-like mound being over 110 feet (35 metres) across, the passage feet (over 18 metres) long, and the chamber 15 feet (over 4 metres) uare. The stones making up the passage and chamber weigh as much as 30 ns each, and are highly polished and carefully fitted together. The second sh feature is the making of a precinct around the mound, which sits on a atform bounded by a ditch 35 feet (nearly 14 metres across). The third is a obable orientation on the sun, which sends a beam of light straight down e passage as it sets at midwinter, and would have done even when the trance was blocked because the closing stone left a gap at the top to emit e sunbeam. The outer part of the passage was rebuilt in the nineteenth ntury during the modern restoration of the monument, so it is not solutely certain that this feature is original; but the rebuilding seems to ve followed the original line. Most Orcadian tomb-shrines, however, face ints between north-east and south-east like English long barrows. Colin chards has suggested that this formed a deliberate calendar whereby a ccession of monuments was illuminated by the rising sun at different nes of the year, which is an enticing idea; though we would still have to ckon with the minority of tomb-shrines which face away from this span. ne fourth Boyne Valley feature at Maes Howe is the presence of engraved signs on ten stones, of triangles, lozenges, diamonds and chevrons. They ere not noticed until the 1980s, being lightly incised: perhaps they were ses for paintings that have disappeared, or perhaps the act of marking the egaliths was more significant than the finished result. Six other Orkney mb-shrines have or have had decorated stones, mostly similar pecked gular designs but also a set of linked spirals. All these similarities to eland are, however, approximate and not exact, and the Orkney onuments lack the Irish customs of grouping passage graves in cemeteries

d cremating the dead placed in them: as usual in the Neolithic, a basic chitectural and ritual idea was being adapted to local tastes and aditions.[11]



34 Orkney tomb-shrines. Above is a photograph of the chamber of Maes Howe, below are plans the two main types of design, and two lesser varieties which may have grown out of these, redrawn er Audrey Henshall.

The tomb-shrines of Orkney have naturally been subject to changing tterns of interpretation within recent British archaeology. Those on the and of Rousay are spaced fairly evenly along the southern shore, facing e channel that divides it from the main island. In the 1970s, Colin Renfrew ok this as evidence that each marked the territory of a different social oup. By 2005 Vicki Cummings and Amelia Pannett could see them instead a succession of sacred sites easily visible and accessible to people avelling by boat along the channel; the settlements of the island are on the posite coast, so that this one would have been set aside for ritual.

ummings and Pannett found water, indeed, to be a key reference point in e setting of all Orcadian tomb-shrines, as in many of those in western itain.[12] Making sense of these monuments as burial places has become creasingly problematic. Some held very large quantities of human bone. bister, a hybrid variety of tomb-shrine overlooking the shelving cliffs and abird roosts of South Ronaldsay, contained at least 338 people, whose dies had been stripped of flesh and dismembered beforehand, and whose ulls and long bones were stacked in different areas. Quanterness, a veloped passage grave on the main island, held fragments of at least 157 dividuals, whose bones had been scorched and then pulverized. As it could ve been built by twenty people, this might represent the burial place of an tire community. On the other hand, it is an easy walk from there to uween Hill, a passage grave with just five human skulls, and then to ideford Hill, another which seemed completely empty. The same pattern is peated across the archipelago. Leaving aside Isbister and Quanterness, the erage Orcadian tomb-shrine held remains of eleven people, deposited over irty to fifty generations. Clearly most of the Neolithic inhabitants of the ands were not interred in these monuments. This has led John Barber to onder if they were indeed primarily shrines, with burials as incidental to eir purpose as they are to a Christian church, and Timothy Taylor to ggest that they were reserved for a social elite, just as the inhabitants of rtain Melanesian islands used to preserve the bones only of the most portant families. Colin Richards has proposed that parts of body were oved between tomb-shrines, to forge relationships between different oups in the islands.[13]

Certainly human bone was nearly always part of an assemblage in the ambers, with material goods – especially pottery – and animal bone companying and sometimes outnumbering it. The most celebrated site to associated with animals is Isbister, which contained pieces of forty-five ts and bones of cattle, sheep, deer and sea eagles, the largest birds of prey und in the islands at that time. It is special in that it was excavated by the rmer who owned the land, Ronald Simison, between the 1950s and 1970s, d it remains open to the public, with a fine little museum that displays the ds that are retained in the hands of his family.[14] It became famous cause of a popular book published in 1984, by John Hedges, which

ıbbed the site the ‘Tomb of the Eagles’ and suggested that these birds had
en the totems of the community which had built the monument. It is true
at twenty-four dog skulls were found at Cuween Hill, while the tomb-
rine at Knowe of Yarso mixed the bones of humans with those of red deer;
ıd two other such monuments contained, respectively, remains of songbirds
ıd cormorants. On the other hand, many had no animals inside, while that
Blackhammer contained, with human beings, sheep, cattle, deer, gannet,
rmorant and geese, and that at Point of Cott had sheep, dog, cattle, deer,
ter, rodents, birds and fish as well as people. Some of the animal bones at
e latter site were modern, and an unknown number had been intruded
ıring the millennia since the Neolithic. More significant still, the tomb-
rine on the Holm of Papa Westray, re-excavated in the 1980s, was proved
have been used as a lambing pen for sheep in between burials, even when
was still active as a ritual monument. This shows that at least some of
ese monuments were kept open for at least some of the time by their
ıilders, making possible all manner of intrusions by domestic and wild
eatures. Furthermore, the dating of the various chamber deposits needs
fining, and it may well turn out that the eagles from Isbister and dogs from
ıween Hill were centuries younger than the human bones, and not
lated.[15] Once more, a neat and exciting interpretation of the Neolithic
ıidence does not match up to its sheer complexity.[16]

All in a Ring

From the opening of the Neolithic, Ireland and Britain had been different
their relative choices of both farming methods and monumental forms,
ıd one such distinction had been the much greater interest shown by the
habitants of Britain, east and south of the Scottish Highlands, in
remonial enclosures open to the sky. Unsurprisingly, with the coming of
e third millennium and the new emphasis on circularity, they applied this
the concept of the enclosure, to produce rings of earth, timber and stone,
ually surrounding open spaces, in large numbers. Although only some of
ese were true circles, many being ellipses or ovals, or formed of a series of
ore or less straight segments joined in the round, or simply roughly and
ıevenly circular, all looked more or less like circles to the eye. They seem,
ɜe the monuments before them, to have been associated with a mobile

estyle of herders and graziers, and concentrate along natural routes across e landscape, the larger and more numerous where two or more of those nverge, to create places where different groups might gather from separate rections at special times.[17]

The earthen circles could consist of a ditch, a bank, or both. In most of e latter cases the ditch was dug inside the bank, with one or more trances through both, to produce a kind of monument customarily called a enge'. The name, as archaeologists have always recognized, is anomalous, ing taken from Stonehenge itself, the most spectacular Neolithic circle of , even though the bank around Stonehenge is inside the ditch. It was veloped as a label for this sort of monument between 1939 and 1951, by uart Piggott and Richard Atkinson, for lack of any better, and has stuck.[18] ıe recurrent form of henges, which is unique to the British Isles, seems to ıply some basically similar purpose for them, and they are the archetypal ual sites of the third millennium. Some 120 were recorded across the chipelago by 2002, twenty-seven in Ireland and the rest in Britain, mostly the south and east, but they varied greatly in size, the nature of the fining enclosure, and internal features, throughout the time in which they ere built. The range of size is anything between less than 30 feet (10 etres) across to almost 1,300 feet (400 metres). Some contain settings of ts, wooden posts or standing stones. In the Thames Valley they are usually ıall, but on the Wessex chalk hills they tend to be huge, while on the chalk ıland of the Yorkshire Wolds, apparently ideal terrain for them, they are most absent, as they are from south-eastern England, the Welsh Border and e West Midlands. In Scotland they are found mostly in the same regions as e earlier Neolithic enclosures: in the Borders and the Tay Valley, Fife and ngus. Even very large specimens sometimes congregate together, such as e six near Thornborough in Yorkshire's Ure Valley, so they were not aced out between territories, and look more like pilgrimage centres than thedrals or centres for chiefdoms. None shows any sign of consistent mestic occupation: they were gathering-places for particular times.[19] Jan arding, perhaps the leading British expert in them, has suggested that their riety of size may represent a hierarchy from small specimens used by dividual groups to large constructions designed for mass seasonal therings. Clearly the sheer effort needed to build the larger presupposes

at they had relatively large catchment areas. On the other hand, as Harding also suggested, the smaller could have been made to serve moments of ligious, social or political difficulty, or to mark the forging of alliances, or cater for seasonal cults; which may explain which henges sometimes cur in groups. The larger could have allowed the expression of a range of cial identities (and, one might add here, a range of religious activities).[20]

The timber rings were even more varied in form – some having one or o circles of posts and some multiple circuits – and in size. Alex Gibson s been the archaeologist most closely associated with their investigation. It very likely that some or many were joined together at the top, like the ıtels of doors, and some may indeed have been roofed.[21] Others took the rm of palisaded enclosures, the uprights being close enough together to rm a continuous wall. Twenty have been discovered in Scotland since the)70s, and are among its largest prehistoric monuments. That investigated in e 1990s at Hindwell in the Radnorshire region of eastern Wales is otentially the biggest Neolithic enclosure in Britain, covering 74 to 86 acres oughly 28 to 35 hectares) and made of posts probably almost 20 feet (6 etres) high.[22] The most famous of all prehistoric British timber circles, owever, is now the small one constructed towards the end of the third illennium near the Norfolk coast, not far from what is now the settlement Holme-next-the-Sea. It was one of dozens of prehistoric circular ritual es being excavated each year in the nation during the economic boom of e 1990s, and what made it special was simply that it was exposed by the tion of the sea, next to a bird sanctuary. First the winter, and then the need let the birds breed, delayed excavation for almost a year, until the summer 1999, by which time the mass media had turned the find into a national nsation. Though it was not originally by the sea, and was not a henge, it as dubbed ‘Seahenge’ by journalists, and had attracted 16,000 visitors fore excavation began. When that took place, it was caught up in a ntroversy over the nature and purpose of the process, generated by the fferent claims and perceptions of archaeologists, local communities and embers of modern pagan traditions. After removal and conservation, it is ow the single biggest attraction of the King’s Lynn Museum.

35 A small henge, excavated and restored by farmer and archaeologist (and celebrated flint-apper) Martin Green, on his land in Cranborne Chase, Dorset.

36 Entrance to the large henge, preserved by being turned into a Roman amphitheatre and then o a Civil War fort, at Maumbury Rings, Dorset.

It was erected in 2049 BC, in a marsh, and consisted of the bole of a large k tree inverted into a hole in the centre of an elliptical palisade of timber sts taken from the same wood, with one narrow entrance which was ocked off after the structure was completed. The tree rings of the oak

rmit the exact dating. The oak itself could have been the point of neration in the monument, which may have been a shrine to its spirit, or ose of all the trees employed in construction. On the other hand, it may ve served as an altar to different spiritual powers or as a platform for a man body during an elaborate funeral rite. The ring was possibly aligned the midsummer sunrise or midwinter sunset, and so may have been signed for a seasonal festival. All that is certain is that it could contain a latively small group of people, who were admitted for a brief period to an closed world of inverted space. The posts were, however, shaped by tween fifty and sixty bronze axes, so that a sizeable number of individuals, rhaps from different communities, seem to have been involved in the aking of the monument.[23]

Timber circles, and most henges, are now visible only as crop marks, but e third kind of circle, that made by standing large stones up on end, aintains a great presence in the British landscape. Indeed, it is virtually destructible, save by human effort, and the stone circle makes up with the mb-shrine one of the two most famous classes of monument from earlier itish prehistory. For many people these rings of grey megaliths, whether t in lush valley pastures, limestone ridges or wilder moor and mountain enery, sum up the imaginative power and physical presence of the remote st. They have been studied as a group since the 1970s by Aubrey Burl and en John Barnatt. Some 702 were recorded as surviving in Britain in 1976, th another 261 in Ireland, and a few more have been discovered since: like nges, they are almost exclusively a feature of the British Isles. Their stribution, however, is broader, covering most regions of the island in hich stone is available, save for the south-eastern corner. The highest ncentrations are in the south-western peninsula and in the north-eastern rn of Scotland around Aberdeen.[24] Many are only a dozen feet across lmost four metres), while the largest of the three in the valley of the River new at Stanton Drew in Somerset is almost 340 feet (about 110 metres) ide. One reason for their abundance may have been that, compared with aking a long barrow or an earthwork, they were relatively easy to nstruct. Tom Clare has estimated that four to five adults, effectively a mily group, could have erected any of the forty-six circles in Cumbria ing the materials available in the third millennium.[25]

Linear monuments continued to be made alongside the round, though in one or wood rather than in earth as before. Scattered up and down western ritain among stone circles, with (as in the case of the latter) a special ncentration in Devon and Cornwall, are lines of megaliths, mostly single t sometimes double. In the south-west they are found most often on the undary between summer and winter pastures, pointing from one to the her. Perhaps they were intended as paths for spirits – some of the double ws are too narrow to be easily trodden by humans – and the higher ground as associated especially with the supernatural and with the human dead. ter Herring has noticed that those on Bodmin Moor tend to highlight dden dramatic views, especially of prominent hills, and wondered if they d not mark special routes for groups engaged in seasonal migration.[26] At e same time, single standing stones were erected, or continued to be ected, in many parts of the island.

37 Upland stone circle, Trowlesworthy Warren, Dartmoor, Devon, superbly photographed in mist the historian Matt Kelly, and reproduced here with his permission.

38 A lowland stone circle, the Nine Stones at Winterbourne Abbas, Dorset, enclosed in their nistry of Works precinct from the mid twentieth century.

For much of the late twentieth century, archaeologists were routinely nployed in counting and classifying the monuments in each of these tegories, as part of the process of discovering, labelling and designating trinsic to modern science. This activity has faltered in recent years, as the ility of the classes concerned has been increasingly called into question. or one thing, they tended to be combined: most timber circles, for example, ere enclosed by earthen banks.[27] Henges often contained wooden rings, d sometimes those of stone. For another, sites were often revealed by cavation to have passed through different stages to reach their enduring rm: thus, a stone circle at Meini Gwyr, in a meadow south of the Preseli ountains of Pembrokeshire, started as a ring of pits, became an enclosure d turned into a henge within which the stones were erected.[28] Timber rcles were often subsequently encircled by henges, and sometimes rebuilt stone.[29] At Forteviot, beside the River Earn in Central Scotland, a timber rcle was erected, only to be knocked down and replaced by a set of small nges. These were then surrounded by one of the largest Neolithic closures in Europe, a circular earthwork over 800 feet (265 metres) across, th an entrance avenue of oak posts, some 7 feet (over 2 metres) wide.[30] rthermore, even when structures were single-period, those of very similar rm could be given quite different sorts of deposit and so apparently be

ed in distinct ways. Julian Thomas has emphasized this pattern in the rticular case of henges, and also noted that some henges contain material nilar to that found on other kinds of Late Neolithic site, arguing from this at function was not derived from form, and henges were not a coherent and unded tradition of construction. Gordon Barclay has agreed, noting that e category of 'henge' monument was an artificial construct created by mparing only individual elements of sites which often had long and mplex histories of development.[31]

Dating the timber and earthen circles is relatively easy, once they are cavated, because they are composed of or made by materials that are sceptible to the necessary analysis. The problem is the relative lack of cavation: only twenty-three henges had provided dates for initial nstruction by 2002. That said, those dates have at least been consistent, e 'classic' form of henge becoming standard from about 2800 BC and parently no longer built in most regions after 2000, which makes it a curely Late Neolithic tradition across most of Britain. The exception is the r north of Scotland, where diminutive henges were built well into the cond millennium, perhaps as short-lived family shrines.[32] Timber rings em to appear earlier, around 3300, and go on much longer, until around 00, although becoming largest, most common and most complex in the id third millennium.[33] Single standing stones, circles and rows are much rder to date, because stone itself carries no indication of one and the few cavations have revealed surprisingly few deposits within or around them. ney can mostly be placed in time only by association with other kinds of onument, though the temptation is to assume that since they follow the me basic pattern as timber rings, they probably cover the same period.[34] one the less, some recent discoveries seem to extend their range still rther. A row on Cut Hill, Dartmoor, was discovered to have been sealed by at which apparently dates its erection to some point in the fourth illennium, so it must be Early Neolithic.[35] At the other end of the nescale, a stone circle at Croft Moraig in Perthshire, which had been given inner ring of timbers and then replaced by a ditched enclosure, was developed around the year 1000 BC into an oval of megaliths orientated on mountain pass and the midwinter sunset. So, in a few places in Britain at ast, such sites were being reused and reconstructed as late as the final

illennium of prehistory, whether or not the beliefs and rites enacted at em were similar to those engaged in before.[36]

This of course begs the question of what those beliefs and rites had ever en. It is impossible at present to tell whether the banks of henge onuments were intended to exclude or include: whether they screened off tivities inside from anybody on the exterior, or provided grandstand ating for people to watch those activities. It may be also that the design of nges reflected the landscape, and so an entire cosmology, the shape presenting the horizon, the banks encircling hills, and the ditches atercourses. It remains unclear whether they had any defensive function, though this would be more obvious if the ditch were outside the bank. A dical alternative to all these ideas has been to note that the construction of henge was often the final activity upon a site, and may have been an act of osure in itself. In this view the surrounding of the ground would have been tended to pen in the spiritual power associated with it or formerly raised on it, and keep people on the outside safe for ever from it when it was andoned.[37] In general, timber and earthwork constructions of the third illennium are full of deposits similar to those from causewayed enclosures flints, pottery, animal bone, and sometimes that of humans – which ggest gatherings, and probably feasting as an important element of those. ne stone monuments, by contrast, show little sign of human visitation, and, ce a timber or earth structure was given standing stones, activity seemed cease there. In 1998 this pattern was formalized by Mike Parker Pearson to a theory that wood symbolized the world of the living in Neolithic itain, and stone that of the dead. He had worked in Madagascar, an island here this belief is securely recorded, and proposed, in partnership with one habitant, an archaeologist called Ramilisonina, that it could be applied to itish prehistory. This provoked an immediate debate, in which colleagues gued that to emphasize the human dead, rather than deities and other pernatural beings, was to narrow the interpretation of the monuments cessively, while to other traditional peoples, such as some Native mericans, wood represented human ancestors.[38] None the less, in its oader sense that wooden structures were places for the human and the one equivalents were associated with the supernatural, and largely reserved r it, the interpretation has found some influential endorsement in the years

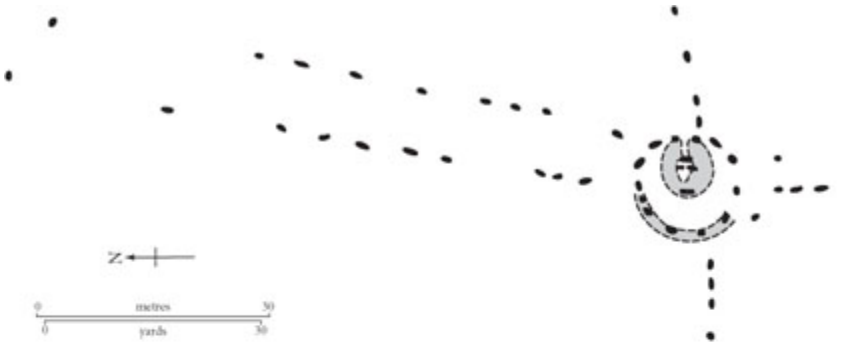
ıce.[39] Colin Richards has even suggested that the stones of circles presented individual dead people, or kin groups or ancestral bodies, and ted as their memorials.[40] At its most extreme, this idea invites us to regard e stone rings of Britain, for centuries imagined as places for gathering, remony and celebration, as having been designed as silent and empty onuments reserved for the deities and the dead, for at least most of the ne. The alternative is that they were used for rites that left no material bris; but this explanation still recognizes a significant contrast between em and the monuments of wood and earth.

Combinations and Collisions

It has already been noted that different kinds of circular structure could combined in various ways, and the relationships between the monuments the fourth millennium and those of the third were still more complex. On e whole, the builders of the rings were not only reluctant to demolish or jure the older structures but often chose to site their creations close to em. Long barrows occasionally received intrusive burials or deposits of tefacts, and the great Dorset cursus was given the latter at times roughout the third millennium.[41] Generally, however, the constructions of e Early Neolithic were abandoned, and it is impossible to tell whether the acing of those of the Late Neolithic in proximity to so many signified a ntinuing reverence for the old monumental forms, a continuing reverence r the location itself, or a triumphant assertion of new ideas over those of e past. In places a more adversarial relationship may have been present. ıe developed passage grave of Bryn Celli Ddu was apparently built over a nge monument containing a stone circle, which was destroyed to make ay for it, the stones being removed, broken or toppled.[42] At Callanish, on e island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland's finest single megalithic mplex was built, in the form of a small stone circle amid a cross-shaped ttern of stone avenues which may have echoed the chamber plan of a veloped passage grave. If so, this reference to older forms did not save it, cause a miniature passage grave was then built in the centre of the circle, eventing any further easy use of it.[43] In both cases – which alike date from e middle of the third millennium – it looks as if old traditions were being

olently reasserted against new, though it is possible that both also presented attempts to reconcile them.

If so, a much more extensive and imposing reconciliation of the forms om the different millennia was achieved in Orkney, in a basin of land near e centre of the main island, where two lakes, Lochs Stenness and Harray, eet. There a chain of monuments was built at the end of the fourth illennium and the first half of the third, of which the westernmost was a rge stone circle, the Ring of Brodgar, contained within a rock-cut ditch. ext, on the peninsula called the Ness of Brodgar, sticking out into the kes, came a settlement, which was succeeded by a single large building, ith walls over 15 feet (5 metres) thick and a cross-shaped chamber. To the st of that, just across the narrow arm of water joining the lakes, was other settlement, Barnhouse, also dominated by a single large building hich seems to have had a ceremonial purpose. Later an enormous circular uilding succeeded it. Individual standing stones were placed in this quence of major constructions, to the east of which were the Stones of enness, a henge with an internal ring of megaliths, smaller than that of odgar but with even taller stones. To the east of that in turn stood the great ssage grave of Maes Howe. More of the complex may remain to be scovered: though the stone circles and tomb-shrine have been famous for er three centuries, the buildings at Barnhouse were only found in the 90s and those at the Ness of Brodgar in the 2000s. Together they make up e single most imposing and celebrated megalithic complex in Scotland, d some of the finest structures in the care of the nation’s heritage agency, istoric Scotland: they are, indeed, now a World Heritage Site.



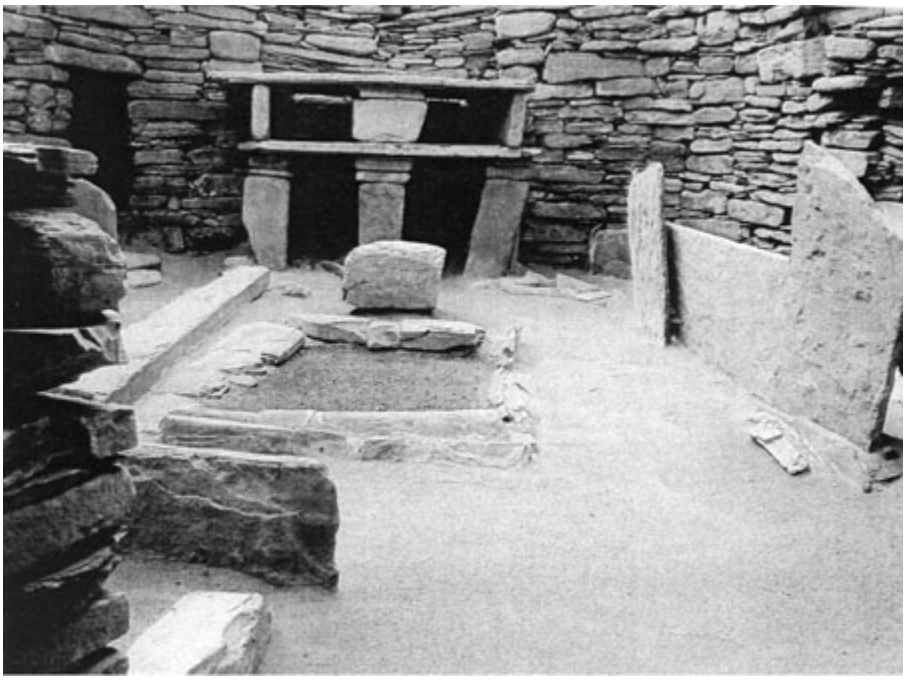
39 Callanish, the striking complex of stone circle and radiating avenues on the Hebridean island Lewis. The plan is redrawn after E. Haddingham, and both it and the photograph clearly show the niature tomb-shrine intruded into the centre.

40 An arc of the Ring of Brodgar stone circle on Orkney.

Colin Richards has pointed out the common links between them, which em to make them function as a single ideological unit. Stenness is a stone rcle that mirrors the form of a circular house with a single entrance and ntral hearth, of the sort most common in Neolithic Orkney, all features produced at the final ceremonial building at Barnhouse nearby. Both enness and Barnhouse contained evidence for feasting. Maes Howe is a ssage grave which imitates the house-like concept as well, being circular ith a single entrance and passage; furthermore, the chamber incorporates ur standing stones which make it into a stone circle as well. Only the arth is missing, perhaps because it was a place of the dead, not the living. ıe dominant Ness of Brodgar building, and that in the initial Barnhouse ttlement, had cross-shaped interiors like that of Maes Howe. The final ilding at Barnhouse faced the midsummer sunset, as Maes Howe parently does the midwinter one. The ditches of the circles of Brodgar and enness would have filled with water at most times of the year, turning em, as Richards has suggested, into ceremonial spaces surrounded in ncentric circles by stones, water, earth, water (the lochs), and earth (the circling hills) All therefore look like different expressions of the same set ideas, seemingly turned into physical form in a great spurt of construction tween about 3300 and 2800 BC. The stones in the circles were of different rms of geology, indicating that they had been brought from separated parts the island by distinct groups, acting in a concerted effort. Colin Renfrew w this as a harmonious enterprise reflecting a newly centralized authority, ch as of paramount chiefs, while Colin Richards views it as a feverish mpetition for status between still independent groups from different stricts: the choice between them must be a matter for personal taste. chards has noted that the stone circle at Stenness was never completed, d that at Brodgar may never have been, so that the actual value of such onuments could have lain in the building of them, and not in any bsequent use.[44]

The discovery of the settlement sites in the complex has invited consideration of what is known of the other Neolithic settlements found in e Orkneys, of which the most famous – and indeed the best-preserved eolithic village in northern Europe – is Skara Brae on the coast west of the

ng of Brodgar. Exposed by a storm in 1850 and excavated in three ccessive campaigns between the 1850s and 1970s, it is noteworthy not erely for the richness of the finds within the houses, but for their stone rniture of beds and dressers. Gradually, however, a dozen other settlements ve been discovered in the islands, of the same age, and it has increasingly en questioned whether they should be regarded as domestic structures at l. Some contain incised designs of the same sort as those found in the local mb-shrines, and mirror the chamber shapes of the latter in the houses, hile Skara Brae also had burials: perhaps those dressers held ancestral ulls instead of the household objects presumed in traditional constructions. Two of the houses at the Ness of Brodgar also had zigzag tterns painted on the walls, in yellow, red and black; the first evidence for uses decorated with paint from anywhere in northern Europe. rthermore, the so-called settlements have Grooved Ware, a kind of pottery corated with similar designs, which appeared around 3200 BC and is found roughout Britain at ceremonial rather than living sites. As such, it is obable that they were themselves ritual spaces, or – for those who wish to ink in terms of elites – the homes of the special class of people who ficiated in ritual.[45] Further attention has been focused on this issue by the scovery of the latest Orcadian settlement site, at the Links of Noltland on estray island, where excavation began in 2009. It was certainly occupied people who engaged in regular practices of farming, hunting, shellfish-thering and craftwork, but also contained at least one massive building ith inverted cattle skulls placed within its structure. The site yielded the ly known carvings of the human form from Neolithic Scotland, two small eces of sandstone and one of clay in rough human shapes with rudimentary cial features and (in two cases) circles which may indicate female breasts clothing fasteners: despite the doubt about their sex, the national press mediately dubbed the first to be found ‘the Orkney Venus’, showing how nservative the public perception of prehistoric artefacts can remain.[46]



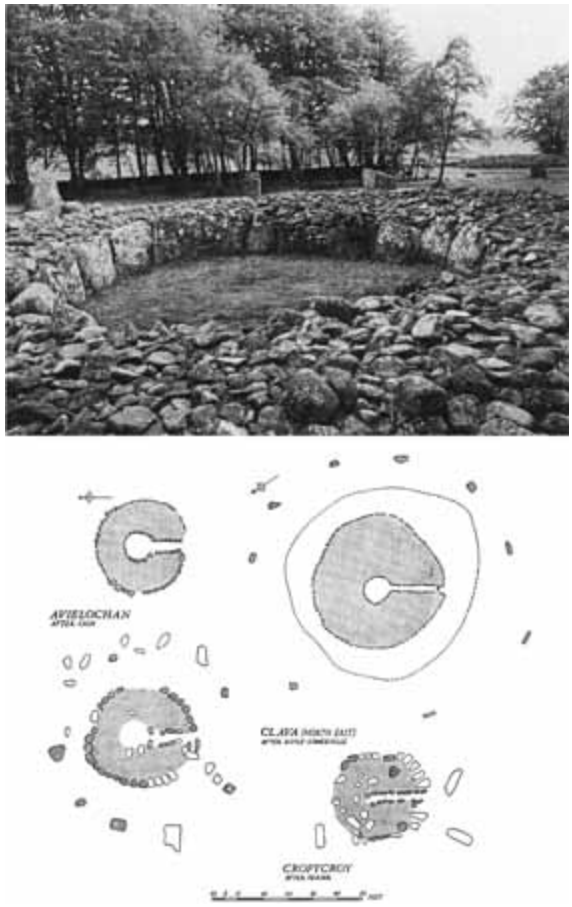
41 House Seven in the Skara Brae settlement, Orkney.

The people of Neolithic Orkney created some of the most splendid ehistoric monuments in the world from a fusion of vision which corporated circles, tomb-shrines and houses. This activity seems to have ased, however, by the middle of the third millennium, and thereafter no ore were erected. Burials became individual, in a new tradition, although posits were still made outside the blocked entrances of the old tomb-rines, and a cluster of the new-style burials was put around the Ring of odgar.[47] In Ireland, henges appeared but remained rare, while stone circles ere adopted enthusiastically. At the same time the tomb-shrine tradition mained buoyant there, and generated a new and widespread form, known the wedge tomb, which became the most common kind of all in the island d flourished well into the second millennium.[48] The situation in Wales is ss clear: henges and timber circles are found in the north and east and all stone rings across the western half of the country, but it is uncertain w these interrelated with the tomb-shrines where they feature in the same strict. In West Wales the dolmens were given some new deposits towards e end of the third millennium, but may have been long disused when those ere made.[49] In the extreme west of Britain, in the Isles of Scilly and the toe Cornwall, a return to the old tradition occurred in the second millennium,

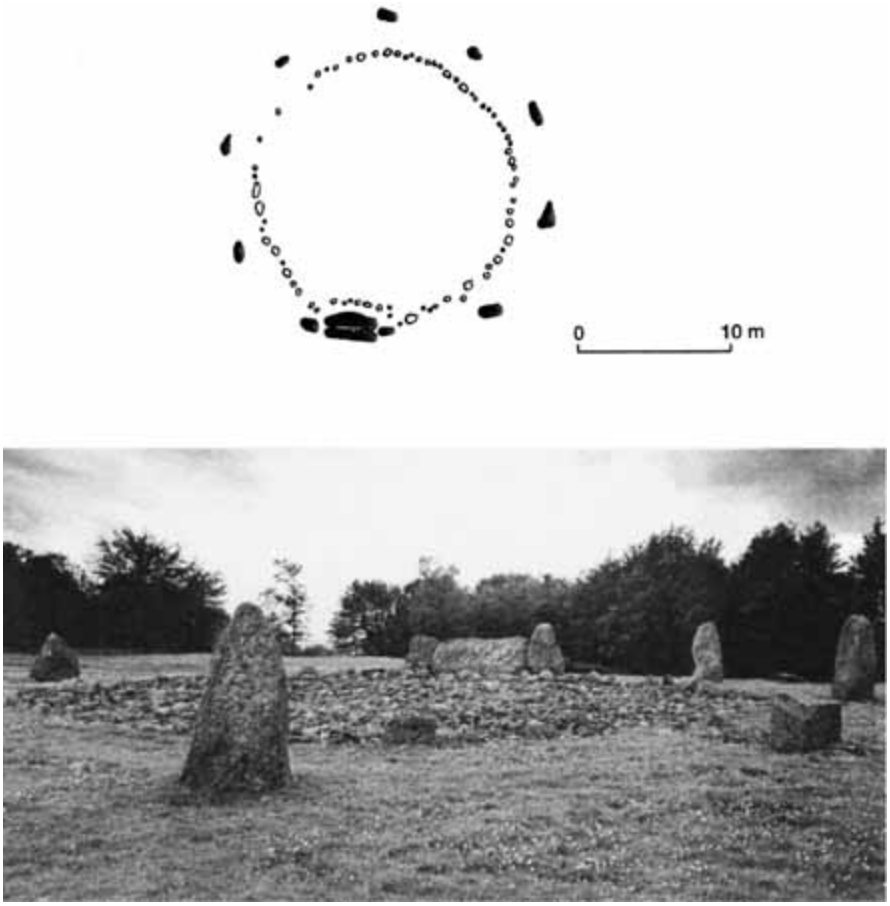
ith the building of entrance graves. These were chambers consisting of a ngle broad passage, entered from the side of a small circular mound. The posits inside usually consist of dark earth mixed with potsherds, charcoal d ash, rather than burials as such, suggesting that this apparent revival of e tomb-shrine put an emphasis on the shrine rather than the tomb mponent (unless, as has been suggested for West Wales, the earth actually nsists of cremations).[50]

In north-east Scotland, new mixtures were made around the same time, ith the appearance of two new kinds of spectacular construction, both of hich have recently been much illuminated by the investigations of Richard radley. Around the head of the Moray Firth were built the Clava Cairns, out fifty passage graves surrounded by stone rings, two with entrances gned exactly on the midwinter sunset and most possibly facing the ovements of the moon. These were conscious imitations of Neolithic onuments, but built a thousand years later, in the early second millennium, d used once more at the end of that millennium: they thus span the Bronze ge.[51] In the equally fertile coastal lowlands of what became berdeenshire, during the late third millennium, appeared the recumbent-one circles, close-set rings with the megaliths graded in height, and one assive horizontal slab positioned between two tall flankers in the southern c. They were probably the first stone circles in the British Isles, apart from onehenge itself, to be identified by scholars as human-made monuments the early sixteenth century).[52] Seventy-one survive, though only nine are tact, and Bradley's excavation of three revealed that the circles represented e last activity on each of the sites concerned: they had been built to rround stone cairns, at least one of which held cremated human bone. The cumbent stone in each was placed along stages of the moon's progress ross the sky, but also aligned on a prominent mountain in the vicinity. The one made actual observation of the moon difficult or impossible in some of e circles, and the internal cairns would have exacerbated this problem. radley has therefore suggested that the orientation was symbolic rather an a component of active ritual, though he has also pointed out that the irns would have made good platforms for bonfires, perhaps cremation res, which would have lit up the circles from inside and made them appear ive. Further recent work has suggested that winter sunsets, rather than the

oon, could have been the reason for the orientation of the rings.[53] The ava Cairns shared with the recumbent-stone circles' graded megaliths the me orientation on the sky, and the erection of the stone ring as the final act construction. Essentially, however, they were using the same ideas in fferent ways, to make distinct kinds of monument on opposite sides of the rampian Mountains.[54]



42 Clava Cairns. The photograph shows one of the group at Balnuaran of Clava, while the plans, rawn after the scholars named by each, are taken from a representative sample of the group.



43 Plan, redrawn after Aubrey Burl, and photograph of an Aberdeenshire recumbent stone circle, anhead of Daviot.

Other parts of Britain went through the third millennium without thering about the new forms of ceremonial site. Kent and Sussex had ntained causewayed enclosures and stone-chambered and earthen long rrows, but apparently did not adopt stone or timber circles and had only e certain henge. The Cheshire basin is another area where Late Neolithic ople were present but did not raise monuments. None were erected on moor, the upland which spans the border of Devon and Somerset, in the olithic, and although geometric settings of stones were created in the rly Bronze Age, they were of very small boulders. Christopher Tilley has ggested that they marked territories for the hunters of the red deer that still am the moor.[55] On the other hand, where impressive monuments were nstructed, which after all was still across most of the British Isles, the emory of their former presence could be surprisingly long. On Machrie oor in the Isle of Arran two timber circles were constructed and then

tted away, the ground in which they had been set being then put under ltivation. Several centuries later, however, a pair of stone circles was ected on the same site: somehow, stories, songs or rites had preserved the dition that the place had been special, and perhaps even the recollection of hat had stood there.[56]

The Wessex Superhenges

The term ‘Wessex’ is commonly used in British archaeology for the alk hills of Wiltshire, Dorset and western Hampshire, those gently rolling lands associated with grass (often cropped to turf by sheep), flowers, blue tterflies, the spiralling songs of skylarks and the mewing of hunting zzards. Its use is in fact a classic example of the power of literary fiction er the human imagination, for, while it originally signified the Anglo-xon kingdom covering south-western England, its application to the chalk untry alone is ultimately the work of the nineteenth-century novelist omas Hardy. Hardy’s coinage itself covered a slightly wider area than the alk hills, but narrowed to them the name is a convenient one, providing a bel where none had existed for a distinctive region in geology, natural story and archaeology, in which ancient monuments survive unusually ell because of a relative lack of dense later settlement and intensive arable rming. Furthermore, its Neolithic inhabitants consistently showed a taste r grandeur and complexity in the construction of monuments which rpassed that of any others in Britain. In the fourth millennium they built e largest chambered long barrow, causewayed enclosure and cursus, and in e third, the largest henges. There were four of these, spaced out at intervals ross the region: at Avebury, in a hollow of hills around the headwaters of e River Kennet in north Wiltshire; at Marden, in the Vale of Pewsey in the ntre of the county; at Durrington in the Avon Valley upon the far side of lisbury Plain from the Vale; and at Mount Pleasant above the River Frome central Dorset.

Of these, Marden was possibly the biggest, but is now the least known, ving been largely destroyed by farming. In 2010 excavations began there, d by Jim Leary and David Field, and found that it may have contained anding stones and certainly had a huge mound, over 45 feet (up to 15 etres) in height, near its centre. A smaller henge also stood in the interior,

ith a house containing a central hearth on the bank. The hearth was so large relation to the building that normal occupation may have been impossible, d the excavators have suggested that it was a sauna for ritual cleansing, e the American Indian sweat lodges.[57] Even less remains now above ound level of Mount Pleasant, excavated by Geoffrey Wainwright in the rly 1970s. It was started around 2800 or 2700 BC, as a circular henge with large mound, like that at Marden, on the western bank. Multiple timber rcles were erected inside, and replaced later with a rectangular setting of egaliths. Between 2200 and 1900 BC the whole enclosure was given a lisade of 1,600 strong oak posts, which may or may not have been a rtification: at any rate, around 1900 this was burned down, the megaliths side wrecked and the site abandoned. There is no way of telling whether is was the result of enemy action, or a ritual decommissioning of the ace.[58]

By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century the sequence of ents at Avebury had been reconstructed as follows. At the beginning of the ird millennium, settings of huge local stones were erected in the hollow nong the hills, including one of three massive blocks in the form of an en-ended rectangle, a type of monument which William Stukeley, in the rly eighteenth century, called a ‘cove’. To the south went up an ceptionally tall and broad monolith, and other megaliths were put round th of these structures, probably in circles. A small earthen bank was dug surround all of these stones. In the middle of the millennium, most obably between 2600 and 2500 BC, this bank was replaced by an enormous nge monument, with a ditch 35 feet (about 13 metres) deep – the largest ade at any henge. A proportionately massive bank was heaped up outside which would have needed a million hours of labour. In the remainder of e third millennium, the world’s largest stone circle, of about a hundred egaliths, was erected inside the ditch, to surround the smaller rings within, d at least two avenues of standing stones were pushed out from the henge, e to a small double stone circle a mile and a half (about 2.5 kilometres) to e south-east and another which apparently ended at another ‘cove’ an uivalent distance to the west. Stones continued to be erected and re-ected in various parts of the whole complex, and burials, human bones and ttery were put in beside them and into the ditch, in the early second

illennium. During medieval and modern times, and perhaps before, almost l of the western avenue and cove, and most of the other avenue and the ıter and inner circles of the henge were destroyed or buried. Many of the egaliths, however, survive, as does most of the great bank and ditch, to ake up one of the most spectacular prehistoric monuments accessible to sitors today and the core of another World Heritage Site. For many sitors, a large part of its charm lies in the fact that the Anglo-Saxons built a llage in and around the henge, much of which still exists as a functioning ral community. In the 1920s and 1930s it was owned by Alexander Keiller, ho had inherited a large family fortune based on the making of marmalade d set about using it to investigate and restore as much of the monument as ssible. As part of this process, many buried or broken stones were ıcovered, repaired and re-erected in the circles and eastern avenue, and ncrete markers placed where destroyed megaliths were thought to have od. The whole great enterprise ended when Keiller's fortune ran out, and e monument is today very much as he left it: more of the great stones have en located where they were interred centuries ago, but there is currently ither will nor funding for further restoration.[59]

44 The surviving portion of the stone avenue leading to the Avebury henge, mostly restored by exander Keiller in the 1930s.

45 The south-western arc of the Avebury henge, showing the bank, ditch and outer circle of galiths. The village is in the background.

Only about 8 per cent of the henge has been excavated, so that any ggestions as to its purpose lack basic evidence, though further aminations were carried out on the avenues and ‘cove’ between 1997 and 03 by the Negotiating Avebury research project. So far, investigations ve revealed a striking lack of debris associated with feasting or other man occupation. Instead, at the time of construction, flints were placed ong the western avenue and antler picks and stone discs in the henge ditch. e central ‘cove’ was completely clean of any sign of activity other than nstruction, though it was the most enclosed and secluded, and so perhaps e most sacred, part of the whole monument, providing a perfect screen or age for ritual. This has naturally now raised speculations that the ‘cove’, d perhaps the entire complex, was never designed for human activity, but served for supernatural beings. If the individual stones did represent cestors or earth spirits, then the circles and avenues were not built for em but actually ‘of’ them. If ceremonies did continue in them after they ere built, then the existence of two avenues, and two stone settings within e henge, could indicate a dedication of each to a different deity, heavenly dy, season, clan, tribe, gender, act of commemoration, or mode of remony. Moreover, as the whole complex was developed in stages over

out a thousand years, the meanings and activities with which it was vested may well have changed profoundly during that time.[60]

Both of the Avebury avenues not only framed views of older onuments, such as causewayed enclosures and long barrows, but ended at near sites of previous Late Neolithic activity, an earthen enclosure in the se of the western one, and a timber monument in that of the south-eastern. ney were connecting with a remembered or legendary past. The timber onument was replaced by the double stone circle, which William Stukeley corded just before it was destroyed in the 1720s, and to which he gave the ocative name, which has stuck, of 'The Sanctuary'. It was re-excavated in 99 by Mike Pitts, who found that what had earlier been presumed to have en a single wooden building had been a mixture of pits which may have ld nothing, and posts which were constantly being replaced. In his words, was not a monument at all – it was a process' – of digging, planting of ooden uprights, and then their removal, in a cycle lasting for perhaps a neration and accompanied by feasts of beef and pork. Then the stones rived, and literally petrified the place.[61] The process was repeated in the rly twentieth century, when concrete markers were placed on the sites here stones, posts and pits alike had been, to create an impression of a ngle design which had in fact never existed. An excavation by Alasdair hittle in 1987 revealed a pair of important monuments nearby of which therto nothing had been known: large timber enclosures near the young ver Kennet in the valley below the Sanctuary. They were 600 and 900 feet ver 200 and 300 metres) across respectively and made of high, solid lisades of oak posts with narrow entrances, one in a double concentric rcle and the other forming a single oval. They had been built and used for a w generations in the late third millennium, posts being replaced as they tted. Pigs had been slaughtered there in large numbers, for meals or crifices, or both, by seasonal gatherings of people who also left pottery ere: the contrast with the absence of such activities inside the great henge, hich was being elaborated at the same period, is striking.[62]

The Avebury monuments were completed by the construction, a short stance up the River Kennet, of Silbury Hill, probably (at almost 100 feet or metres) the tallest prehistoric mound in the world, and also (being about

.0 feet or 135 metres across the base) the second largest after one in the nited States. Its profile, of a massive flat-topped cone, has become one of e icons of British prehistory, but the present shape is the result of its odification for use as an Anglo-Saxon fortress, and we may never know w it corresponds to the original form of the monument. It has been the ject of repeated investigations between the late eighteenth and early enty-first centuries, of which the most recent and productive have been ose conducted between 2000 and 2008 by Jim Leary and David Field for nglish Heritage, to stabilize the mound after one of the earlier tunnels iven into it, by a Georgian antiquarian, partly collapsed. They revealed at it had been built, like the other outlying monuments of the henge, in the e third millennium, probably somewhere between 2400 and 2300 BC. It as not planned from the beginning to take its final form, but developed stead through rapid stages from a single hearth through a complex series of ounds, sometimes single and sometimes multiple and composed of fferent kinds of material. Eventually it reached its present vast scale, not a ne circle but nine-sided, and made mainly of successive banks of chalk ith sandstone boulders embedded in it, and surrounded by a ditch and bank hich were themselves recut into different forms over time. Set in open alk grassland, it commanded wide views. The builders therefore kept anging their minds regarding what and how Silbury should be, and as the act external form of the final monument is not now ascertainable, neither its purpose.[63]

Leary and Field have noted that the material in the mound was carefully osen from different locations, like the stones in the great Orkney circles, d suggested that it could have been the work of separate communities gaged in a work to confer luck and health upon themselves, or acting out a yth. The huge ditch, unnecessary in practical terms, may have been tended to keep out evil spirits.[64] Logically, if the whole structure had any rpose once it reached its final size, this must fall into one or both of two tegories: that it was a symbol, embodying an idea; or a platform to raise a oup of people a very long way above the ground. The most famous oponent of the former idea is Michael Dames, who has claimed that it presented the body of the Great Mother Goddess of the Neolithic, pecially with relevance to the harvest season.[65] The difficulties with the

ncept of this goddess have been discussed earlier, but as it is still one nable reading of the evidence, so must this interpretation of Silbury be, though the presumed connection between the hill and harvest has not stood to scrutiny.[66] Another reading of Silbury's symbolism is that, if stones presented spirits, those inside the mound made it a home for dead cestors.[67] If the primary function of the eventual monument was as a atform, this could have been to observe celestial events, or be related to e fact that the Avebury henge, and the ends of both its avenues, can be en from the summit. It could therefore have been a signalling station from hich rites could be activated in those different places, to mesh in a nchronized pattern.[68] It has some parallels elsewhere, in the large mounds und at the Marden and Mount Pleasant henges, while the four or five nge monuments of more normal size clustered at Knowlton in Dorset, on e chalk between Mount Pleasant and Durrington, had another beside them. ll of these, however, are small compared with Silbury, and the latest team archaeologists to consider them together has concluded that they do not at esent seem to form a coherent group.[69] However, there is one other onument that does seem to be directly connected with Silbury, five miles wn the Kennet Valley at Marlborough, where a conical mound 62 feet (19 etres) tall has long stood in the grounds of the famous school there, and d been part of a medieval castle before then. Hopes had often been voiced at it might be still older, and Jim Leary at last led an investigation in 2011 hich proved that it was indeed Late Neolithic, yielding various dates anning the mid to late third millennium. These suggest that it was built at ughly the same time as Silbury and by a similar process of repeated construction. Though only two-thirds of the size, it now appears very early to be the companion of the great structure a short distance upriver.[70]

46 The classic, crème caramel profile of Silbury Hill.

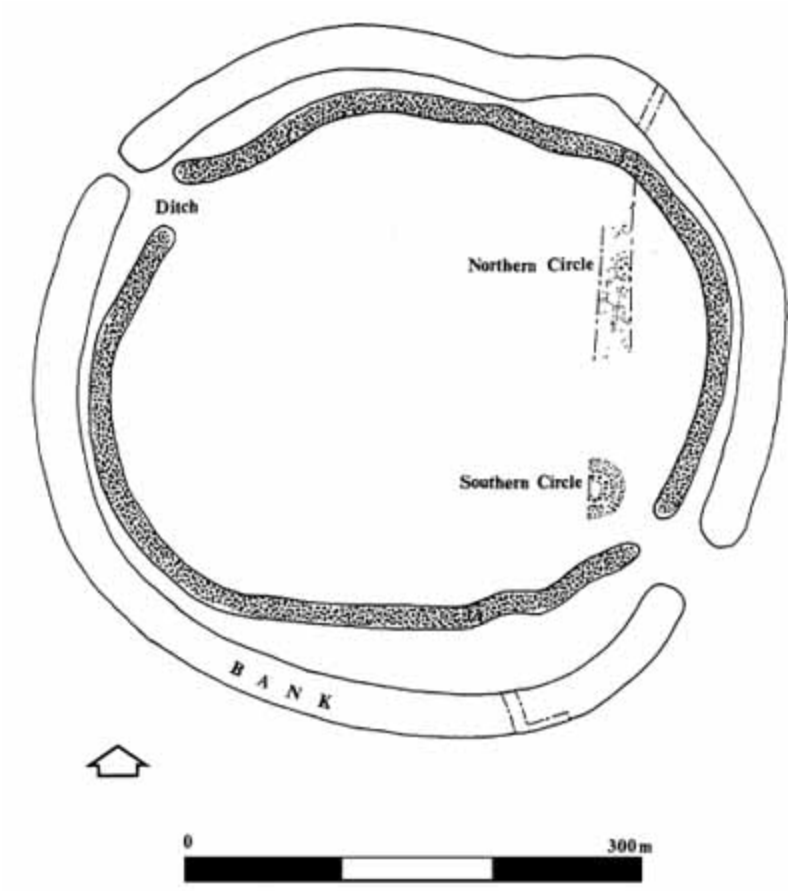
Today, the Avebury monuments are awkwardly divided, the National ust having custody of the henge itself, the eastern avenue of stones and the ilding which contains the museum of finds from local excavations, while nglish Heritage is responsible for the contents of that museum and also the tlying sites: the Sanctuary, Silbury, and the West Kennet long barrow.[71] In dition, the county and parish councils must also have a voice in anagement, as has the national authority which cares for highways, as a ajor public road runs through the centre of the henge. It is a situation ilor-made for confusion and tension, which so far have been avoided by e careful co-operation of all parties. During the 1990s Avebury at last gan to attract so many visitors that the impact on the monuments became ngerous, but that was partly remedied in the 2000s by the simple if thless expedient of making car parking more restricted and expensive.

The last of the Wessex ‘superhenges’, Durrington Walls, lies near the ver Avon several miles downstream from Marden. It is larger than vebury – 1,680 feet (over 560 metres) across – and visitors can easily istake the surviving arc of bank for a natural feature. In 1966–8 it was rtly excavated by Geoffrey Wainwright, who found pits with deposits of ttery, tools and animal bones and two large circular timber structures hich have been interpreted as free-standing posts defining ceremonial eas. The southern one alone had six rings of them and was over 120 feet

0 metres) in diameter.[72] In the mid 2000s the monument was further
amined, by the Stonehenge Riverside Project, probably the largest
iversity-based archaeological field enterprise ever seen in the United
ngdom, involving five academic institutions and including Mike Parker
arson and Ramilisonina, Joshua Pollard, Julian Thomas and Colin
chards. It showed that, like the palisaded enclosures near Avebury,
urrington Walls had been used for tool-making and for feasts of beef and
rk, which featured large amounts of Grooved Ware. The cattle had been
iven there for hundreds of miles, perhaps from Wales or the West Country,
d the thousands of pigs slaughtered at an age which, given their season of
rth, indicated that the festivities were held at midwinter. The axis between
e southern timber circles and the south-eastern entrance to the earthwork
indeed, aligned on the midwinter sunrise. The new excavations also
covered inside the henge the largest Neolithic settlement known from
rth-western Europe, with up to a thousand houses handsomely made with
alk floors, wooden beams, large central hearths, and markers for furniture.
ey were, however, still flimsy structures, made for seasonal gatherings of
ousands of people, with five more substantial buildings, contained within
tches, lacking occupational debris and possibly representing shrines, in the
estern half of the henge. A roadway of packed earth and flint – the only
e from the third millennium yet known in Europe – ran from the south-
stern entrance to the Avon. The whole great complex was built in the
iddle of the third millennium, the village and timber circles first and then
e henge around them.[73]

Just outside Durrington Walls to the south was built another, smaller,
ucture, which was discovered by aerial photography in 1925 and
cavated over the next three years by Maud Cunnington. It was promptly
bbed ‘Woodhenge’, because it had a henge’s bank and ditch, which had
closed six concentric rings of wooden posts. In 1970 it was examined
ain and dated to the late third millennium. The Stonehenge Riverside
oject dug there in 2006 and found that stones had once stood inside as well
posts, while many of the pits may never have held either. Rather than
ing a single, planned out, structure, the site had constantly developed, like
e Sanctuary, with stones succeeding posts and posts succeeding each other,
d deposits of pottery, animal bone, flints and carved chalk objects put into

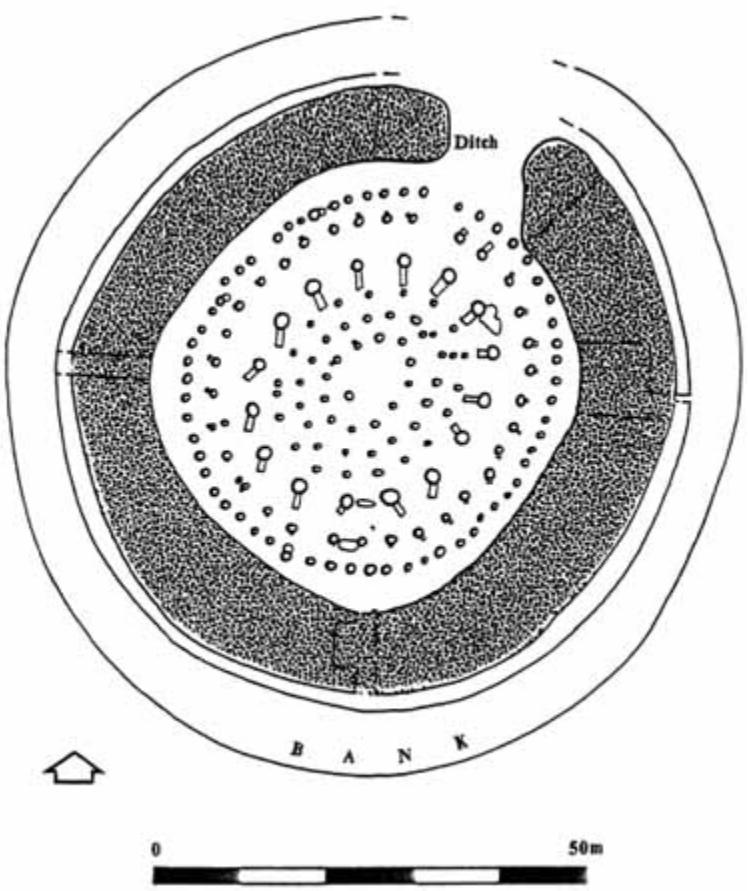
e holes that had held them, and into the ditch. Its entrance was aligned on e midsummer sunrise.[74] How it related to the older and much bigger henge Durrington Walls, beside it, is not known. Durrington had, moreover, other satellite structure, about two miles (almost three kilometres) to the uth-west, which has eclipsed its huge neighbour in all historic times to come the most famous prehistoric monument in the world: Stonehenge. It not merely a product of prehistory but an icon of cultural history in itself, ith a continuous record of admiration and investigation going back almost ne centuries before the present, long before most of the other relics of cient Britain began to be given attention.[75]



47 Plan of Durrington Walls henge, redrawn after Geoffrey Wainwright.

This pre-eminence has been due to three different factors. The first is at the appearance of Stonehenge is unique, representing a lone experiment working stone as if it were wood, with the planning and smoothing of rfaces and the making of classic carpenters' joints. Probably, the wooden

uilding that it copied was the southern circle inside Durrington Walls which as the same size. The result is the famous settings of three stones joined e doorways with jambs and lintels (or, in more brutal times, like a gibbet hang criminals, which is what a ‘henge’ originally meant in medieval nglish). They make a logo or brand symbol, instantly recognizable. Its cond reason for fame is its accessibility, in the heartland of a leading odern nation. By the 1840s the main London to Exeter highway had been uilt right past it, and it has since been contained within a junction of arterial ads, the removal or reduction of which is a major current project of ritage managers trying to improve presentation of the site: English eritage is responsible for the stones themselves, but the National Trust for e surrounding land, and once more local and highway authorities are volved in any developments. The third factor in its importance is the ement of mystery: from the publication of the first major survey of British tiquities by William Camden in the reign of Elizabeth I, books on onehenge have emphasized the lack of a generally agreed explanation of purpose. It has been accepted as possessing some kind of ritual gnificance, but the nature of that remains open. This in turn has couraged individuals to produce self-proclaimed ‘breakthrough’ potheses, which have achieved celebrity at particular periods. The most ccessful to date has been that of Geoffrey of Monmouth, published in the elfth century – that it was a war memorial constructed by the wizard erlin – which was dominant for about five hundred years. In the 1740s illiam Stukeley proclaimed it a temple of the Druids, an idea which hieved pre-eminence for one century and remained popular for another. uring the twentieth century, when it was firmly dated to the Late Neolithic d Early Bronze Age, the element of mystery was stressed still further and s enabled the monument to function as a people’s temple, apparently tside the power of learned archaeologists and historians to appropriate and plain, in which anybody is free to see what she or he wills. This populism exemplified by the custom of crowds of ordinary people gathering at the ones to witness the midsummer sunrise. This developed spontaneously ound 1870 when transport improvements made access easier; Stonehenge racted thousands by the 1890s, and this has continued, subject to ctuations in popularity and official tolerance, ever since.



48 Plan of Woodhenge, redrawn after Maud Cunnington.

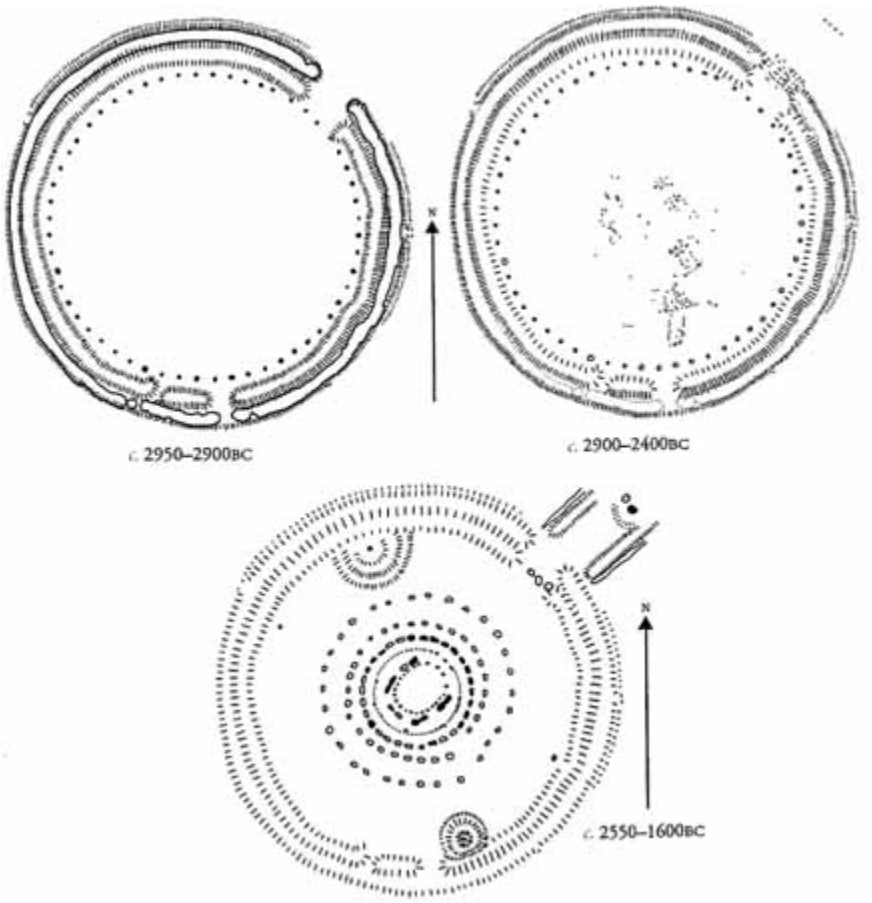
For centuries, Stonehenge has effectively functioned, even more tensively and effectively than other relics of prehistory, as a mirror in hich modern people can reflect and justify their own prejudices, ideals and pectations. Those who find their own time, and society, wanting have seen it the work of ancestors of a superior knowledge and morality. Those who each the creed of progress, or their own religion, or else the folly of ligion in general, have filled it in their imagination with gory, barbaric and giastic ancient rites. In the 2000s it became, uniquely, the focus of two fferent projects of investigation, equally well funded and led by equally stinguished archaeologists. The result was a complete, if good-natured, sagreement. To Timothy Darvill and Geoff Wainwright, who led the PACES Project, it was a place of healing, the stones being believed to ssess magical curative properties which attracted pilgrims seeking relief.[76] ıe Stonehenge Riverside Project adopted the theory of Mike Parker earson and Ramilisonina, two of its leading members, that timber

mbolized the living and stone the dead. In their eyes, Stonehenge was a rine to the ancestors, visited at special seasonal times in order to honour em, after the parties and pig roasts at Durrington Walls, the place of nber, and life.[77]

Certainly, there is now some agreement as to the sequence of nstruction on the site. It commenced soon after 3000 BC, with a circular gmented ditch between two banks, similar both to a henge and to one of e older causewayed enclosures. Pits were dug in a circle within this rthen ring, which may have held timbers or stones: if stones, then these ay have been the smaller megaliths still visible at the monument, cknamed bluestones. Whatever they had held, the pits, called in modern nes the Aubrey Holes, were later emptied and given cremation burials stead. These continued through the early and middle third millennium at e average rate of one every two years, making the site the largest cemetery t found in Britain from the Late Neolithic. Mike Parker Pearson and his am from the Stonehenge Riverside Project have suggested that it was the rial ground of a ruling family, and continued to be so as the monument ok the form evident today. Between 2650 and 2480 BC a double setting of uestones was erected, surrounded by a circle and (inside that) a horseshoe-aped setting of huge sandstone blocks, worked like wood as has been scribed. Either soon after that, or in the later third millennium, the uestones were rearranged to match that, into an outer circle inside the ndstone one and an inner horseshoe within that of sandstone. The entrance the monument was aligned on the midsummer sunrise, like that of Woodhenge', and banks and ditches dug to create an avenue running from it wn to the River Avon. The result was a monument unique in prehistoric itain for its combination of design, survey and construction skills. It made a series of stone screens confining a relatively small central space, served either for an elite or for all members of a community in succession rotation, at special times of their lives. In the early second millennium, o rings of pits were dug between the stones and the encircling bank but ver seem to have held anything, so that their purpose and significance main baffling. Around the same period, eleven of the stones were lightly cised with the largest group of prehistoric rock decorations in southern

ıgland, mostly showing axe heads, but also a dagger, a knife, and ıadrilaterals.[78]

Of course, things are not as simple even as the limited amount of formation provided above would seem to imply. Beneath the topsoil, the terior of the monument is pockmarked by hundreds of holes which parently once held stones or timbers, very badly disturbed by excavations rried out between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, so that the ecise sequence of construction may never be known. Furthermore, fresh scoveries are at present constantly being made in and around the site. In)08–9 the Stonehenge Riverside Project dug at the point at which the enue running from the monument met the Avon and found that a henge most 80 feet (over 24 metres) across had already existed there before the enue was made, and had itself apparently succeeded a bluestone circle. ıe following year, the newly formed Stonehenge Hidden Landscapes oject announced the existence of a possible miniature henge between the ones and bank of Stonehenge itself, and of a former mound within the ones.[79] It is also not clear that Stonehenge was ever completed. The south-estern arc of megaliths is missing, and from Sir Flinders Petrie in the neteenth century to Paul Ashbee in the 1990s there have been competent holars to suggest that it was never present, and that the space there was ther always empty or was finished in wood, not stone.[80] It is possible that e builders just ran out of stones, or else that the monument was actually signed to have a superb north-eastern façade but to be open on the posite side. If so, this would have reinforced the greatest single solar ignment of the developed phase of the monument: not on the midsummer nrise along the avenue and through the north-eastern entrance, but on the idwinter sunset. This would have sent a narrow ray of light between the rights of the Great Trilithon, the largest of the three-stone, doorway-like ttings of sandstone blocks in the interior (and the tallest single prehistoric one structure in Britain) on to the so-called Altar Stone which lay near the ntre of the monument. Such a superlative effect was lost because at some ıknown time before the Middle Ages, one of the uprights of the Trilithon – hich had never been long enough to be securely anchored – fell and broke, rt-burying the Altar Stone and wrecking the central space of the site.[81]



49 Plans of three successive phases of Stonehenge, redrawn after Ros Cleal *et al.* The post holes
own as dots in the middle phase belong only highly conjecturally to it.

The biggest of the current problems hanging over Stonehenge, however, ncerns the so-called bluestones in its structure. Forty-three of these rvive out of an original sixty to a hundred. In 1923 Herbert Thomas nfirmed what had been suspected since the nineteenth century: that they uld probably all have come from South Wales, and most could only have iginated in the Preseli Mountains in northern Pembrokeshire. The point of ntention, which has been constant and sometimes bitter since the 1980s, is hether they were brought to Wiltshire by human action or that of a glacier ring a recent Ice Age. In favour of the latter theory is the sheer physical fficulty of the transportation process involved. The large stones used to uild every other megalithic monument in north-western Europe were found thin less than six miles (around ten kilometres) of the site. Most of the onehenge bluestones would have had to travel at least 250 miles (400 lometres), mostly by sea around some of the most dangerous coastlines in

ritain. In favour of human transport is the fact that no trace of glacial tion has been found in Wiltshire; though it should be added that no search r any has yet been made in the western parts of the county, from which ones might still have been moved across Salisbury Plain with relative ease. ill, none of the bluestones at Stonehenge is marked by glacial action. oreover, the much larger sandstone blocks at Stonehenge undoubtedly oke the six-mile rule, being dragged at least 20 miles (around 32 lometres) from the north. In the 2000s the SPACES project investigated eseli with the problem in mind and found that the geological patterning of e rocks there was mirrored in the way in which the identical kinds of rock ere placed around Stonehenge. They also discovered evidence for arrying, a possible sacred precinct and possible healing wells at points on eseli where stone outcropped of the sort found at Stonehenge; but so far ne of these features have been proved to be prehistoric. The category tonehenge bluestone' in fact covers thirteen different types of rock, not all which are found in Preseli. The Altar Stone, for example, is of a type hich occurs most commonly across a broad zone of south-eastern Wales, ostly far inland.[82] At present we know much more about the bluestones an we did in 1990, but are no closer to solving the problem of how they ached Stonehenge.

50 Stonehenge (of course), the surviving upright of the Great Trilithon, with its woodworker's on joint, showing on the right-hand side.

What has been proved is that all of the Wessex ‘superhenges’ were nstructed, and in use together, around the middle of the third millennium :: a huge investment of labour and belief representing the apogee of the eolithic monumental tradition in Britain. They followed no standard plan d were not conceived as single projects; rather, like earlier monuments, ey showed how the same basic architectural language could be deployed peatedly in different ways, and represented a constant reworking of iginal ideas until at last the process ended and they were left in a final rm. This, and the fact that they were spaced out across the chalk country, vites the conclusion that they represented separate, and competitive, mmunities. Back in the 1970s Colin Renfrew suggested that they signalled e emergence of chiefdoms in the region, led by powerful rival leaders who uld draw upon greater resources than the smaller and more numerous oups who had made the long barrows.[83] Such an interpretation fitted the idence, but also owed much to the modern interest in mechanisms of state-ilding, and the focus upon economic and social evolution as the main rce of historical change which had been invited by the challenges of arxist theory. It has since been pointed out that there is little evidence of elite in Late Neolithic British society – few rich grave goods and no high-atus dwellings – and that elsewhere in the world (such as in Madagascar) pressive monuments have been constructed by egalitarian societies. If arismatic leaders did direct the work which made the huge Wessex onuments, then they are more likely to have been religious functionaries an chiefs.[84]

If they led groups that were competing with each other to raise agnificent and enduring structures, then it is noteworthy that the process ems to have proceeded without violence, unless the burning of Mount easant is actually evidence of this. It seems at present as if there is much ss evidence of warfare during the later Neolithic of Britain than in the rlier: no apparent fortifications, and no concentrations of arrow shot. here are certainly individual cases of homicide. In 1978 the body of a ung man equipped as an archer was found in the bank of Stonehenge; he d been interred there in the late third millennium. He had been hit by tween three and six arrows, and finished off with one at close range. A emation burial within a timber circle near Welshpool in the Upper Severn

alley of eastern Wales contained four arrowheads. One of the few human nes found by the Stonehenge Riverside Project inside Durrington Walls d been shot by an arrow (and preserved for a long time before being ried). These may, however, have been not war heroes or victims but man sacrifices or else the casualties of private murders or blood feuds.[85] ne explanation in terms of sacrificial victims may be weakened by the fact at in recent years what had been one of the most famous pieces of idence formerly produced to argue for the practice of human sacrifice in itish prehistory has been removed from the record. It was the body of a all child, found near the centre of 'Woodhenge' by Maud Cunnington and clared to have been that of a three-year-old girl, buried as a foundation posit at the building of the structure after her skull had been split by an e. This innocent little victim subsequently featured in works of chaeology and of fiction alike as a classic reason to regard ancient Britain a place of sustained barbarism.[86] Only in 2000 did Mike Pitts point out at the skull could have fallen apart naturally along the unclosed suture nes found in the cranium of a child. Moreover, the excavation of the onehenge Riverside Project has now raised the possibility that the burial as not Neolithic at all, but intruded at a later period.[87] As a result, the cord of apparent casualties of violence from the third millennium in itain is even sparser than was previously thought. Indeed, Mike Parker earson has suggested that the building of the Wessex 'superhenges' – above l, Stonehenge – was itself a process of union, creating or formalizing a llective identity for the people of southern Britain, and perhaps of the hole island, after the turmoil and localism of the fourth millennium.[88]

In recent years, the period of globalization and of the European Union – d of the analysis of chemical isotopes in teeth – attention has shifted from e local to the Continental context of Stonehenge. In 2002 the richest grave er found from the time when the monument was in use was excavated on e far side of the River Avon, and the occupant dubbed, from his uipment, 'the Amesbury Archer'. His teeth revealed that he had grown up the Continent (though in many possible locations), and the burial, with its ofusion of fine ceramics, and gold, copper and stone objects (almost a ndred items in all), was made in about 2300 BC. The special honour shown him might have meant that he was a king or chief, or a skilled

etalworker who had helped to foster this new technology in Britain, a ealthy pilgrim, an ambassador from a powerful people, or just a very pular individual. Another grave rich in goods was found fairly close to at of the Archer in the following year, of three adult men, a teenage boy d three children, perhaps a family group, who had grown up in a region of d rock: probably Brittany, Portugal or central France. Three of the bodies ere incomplete, and the bones weathered, suggesting that they had been nsported from some distance. The adults were nicknamed ‘the Boscombe owmen’.[89] These people are evidence that by the later third millennium dividuals from far across Europe were travelling to Britain, and perhaps at the great complex of ritual monuments based on Durrington Walls had quired a reputation which penetrated deep into the Continent. It provides a eful balance to an emphasis upon the huge Wessex henges as products of al local territories, even though this is equally well based on the chaeological data.

The Circles and the Dead

It was said earlier that the new interest in rings as standard units of cred space was combined in Ireland and the far north and west of Britain ith the older architectural form of the tomb-shrine, to produce the veloped passage grave. Across most of Britain the application of circular ace to the ritual disposal of human remains took a different form: that of e interment of those remains in individual burials under round mounds, hich were then sealed and not touched again. The mounds concerned, naller than those of the long barrows, have come to feature alongside stone rcles as the most familiar British monuments from the late third and early cond millennia. On the uplands of southern Britain, especially on the alk, they stand out like green bowls, and have in modern times been given e name of round barrows. In the harsher hills and mountains of the north d west they are formed of piled stones, and given the modern label of und or ring cairns.

The use of round mounds as burial monuments was nothing new in the eolithic, and nor were individual burials: indeed, the two were sometimes mbined. The circular mounds had been built for most of the fourth illennium, especially in Yorkshire where at the end of that millennium they

ew to impressive size, to produce such famous examples as Duggleby owe in a valley of the eastern chalk hills, the mound of which contained 000 tons of chalk and clay. It eventually covered nine complete burials and er fifty cremations, with yet more individual human bones piled around ith those of wild and domestic animals. Three of the complete burials, all ult men, were given grave goods, one of them a rich assemblage of rowheads, knives, ox bones, beavers' teeth, boars' tusks and a bone pin. ne first interments were successively burials in a pit, between about 3450 d 3300 BC, some of which showed signs of violent death: as stated above, is has become recognized as a significant feature, though a minority one, fourth-millennium bodies. More were added between 3000 and 2900 BC, d the great mound built in the early twenty-ninth century BC, interments in continuing for the rest of the millennium. It is just possible that it was fluenced by the massive coverings of developed passage graves, as it is ore or less contemporary with Maes Howe and younger than those of the oyne Valley. Chemical tests reveal that none of the people in the mound d lived in the surrounding chalk country, so either the chalk hills were a ace to which people came from elsewhere to bury their dead or else vellers upon the chalk reserved burial for distinguished strangers, or even emies killed in war or human sacrifices, with whom the objects buried ere not grave goods but offerings to deities.[90] The great change that came the early third millennium was that this complex of fourth-millennium atures – the round mound, the individual interments of complete bodies hich were often multiplied over time within the mound, and the placing of ssessions with some burials – ceased to be a regional and a minority adition and became dominant throughout Britain.

This being so, it may be wise at this point to consider some of the neral problems of interpreting the meaning of placing objects with the ad, problems that are going to recur throughout most of the remaining apters of this book. Grave goods may have been intended to equip the ad person for the next life, but may equally well have been especially voured possessions of that person, placed in the grave lest the ghost should nger near them and trouble the living. Alternatively, they may have been fts made to deities or spirits to persuade them to favour the spirit of the rson laid with them, or gestures of generosity on the part of guests at the

neral, presented to do honour to the deceased. Where they consist of ıives and/or of pots and other vessels, they may have been involved in the neral feast and then been interred as polluted by that event. All these are ry different motivations for an act which leaves the same material mains. Likewise, funeral rites may have been intended to remove the dead ɔm the society of the living or to reintegrate them, placing them in a new d different relationship with the living.[91]

Only a fraction of the prehistoric round barrows that once existed in itain survive as visible monuments, as they were relatively easy to molish to make way for farming. As such they are now found mostly in lands where agriculture was less intense, though even there a lot have en flattened; an aerial survey of the Dorset chalk upland of Cranborne ıase, made in 2006, doubled the number known to have existed there by ıding the marks of many in fields.[92] More formerly existed in lowlands an on hills, and over four hundred of them, now levelled, have been entified in the Great Ouse Valley of Cambridgeshire. The greatest ncentration in Britain seems to have been on the Isle of Thanet, then a rtile islet off the Kent coast and now merged with it.[93] It is difficult to termine why particular locations were chosen for the mounds. Sandy errard, noting that the round cairns on Dartmoor are mainly found in the land grazing zones, offered six different reasons why this might have been : because those areas were of low economic value; because the cairns built wer down have been destroyed; because the prime grazing lands were pecially honoured as sacred; because the uplands were regarded as the me of the deities; because placement higher up made the cairns look more ıpressive; and because the cairns represented territorial markers tablishing grazing rights.[94]

The chronology of round barrows in southern England is easiest to tablish. Between 2500 and 2150 BC they were relatively small and mostly vered individual male bodies with grave goods. Between 2150 and 1850 : they became larger and more varied in form, and contained a greater oportion of women and children, while bodies were treated in more verse ways and cremation grew more common. Mounds were often opened and rebuilt, with insertion of fresh burials. They were often placed

ose to Neolithic monuments, and sgrave goods were abundant. From 1850
1500 formal cemeteries of round barrows developed, each often placed
er a central cremation burial, which was sometimes accompanied by rich
ods. Big mounds, however, did not necessarily mean rich graves, and vice
rsa. The barrows were usually built in a single operation and not reopened,
d were constructed over a much larger area of terrain. Finally, between
00 and 1200, they continued to be built in a single phase, but were smaller
d simpler and reused repeatedly for cremation burial, and more cremations
ere also placed around them, while grave goods died out.[95] What seems at
st sight to have been a consistent tradition, spanning more than a thousand
ars, turns out to have been subject to constant development and mutation.

Timothy Darvill has mapped out six main regional styles for the making
round burial mounds by the early second millennium, within each of
hich the basic similarity of model comprised a wide range of actual
uctures.[96] The barrows on the Wiltshire and Dorset chalk were most often
wl-shaped (in Dorset 94 per cent of those surviving), but could also take
e form of bells, discs, ponds and saucers.[97] In Wales, and England west of
e River Severn, mounds and cairns could be bowl-shaped, sometimes with
ne kerbs, or else given the form of rings of heaped stones with central
aces. On the Clwydian Mountains of north-eastern Wales, the many cairns
ere based on the concept of the round pile of stones above cremations,
hich were often placed in urns. Some, however, covered single burials,
hers multiple burials made at the one time, and yet others multiple burials
ade successively.[98] In the south-western peninsula of Britain we find
mple earthen bowls, kerbed cairns, cairns on stone platforms, platform
irns with rims, platform cairns with central mounds, kerbed platform
irns, ring cairns, and cairns including natural rock outcrops. On one
land region of the peninsula, Dartmoor, the ring cairns alone divide into
mple circles of piled stones, standing stone circles with linking banks,
led-stone circles with kerbs, circles of piled stones built on platforms, and
rcles of piled stones with piled-stone mounds in the centre. Excavation
ually reveals their structure to have been even more complicated.[99] In
rkney the tradition of burial under a small round mound, usually with a
ngle original grave, likewise became general around 2000 BC; but the
rials could be either cremated or unburnt, and placed in pits, pockets of

ck or stone coffins.[100] Sometimes sites that look like levelled round rrows turn out to be something else: one in Derbyshire and one in ampshire turned out to be round platforms, surrounded by ditches, which ere apparently used for feasts in the Early Bronze Age. The former had emated human bone scattered at points on it, as if the dead were invited to in the meals, or to consecrate the space.[101] Human remains continued to be aced around monuments that seem to have been gathering-places, and in e later third millennium were found inside timber circles more often than fore. They were also put into rivers during the third and second millennia, d cave burial remained a custom. Nor were mounds needed for burial, meteries of flat graves being found in parts of Britain north of the River es.[102]

The round barrows most celebrated in British archaeology are those of e Wiltshire and Dorset chalklands, and especially a few which covered ry richly equipped burials from the early second millennium. In 1938 uart Piggott described these as being the work of a ‘Wessex Culture’, a bel which has stuck: the ‘type specimen’ of it was the Clandon Barrow cavated in southern Dorset in 1882, where the burial was accompanied by incised gold lozenge, a shale mace head with five gold bosses, an amber p, an incense cup and a dagger with a wooden sheath.[103] About a hundred ch richly furnished graves under round mounds are known from the gion, a dozen of which included gold objects.[104] The Wessex round rrow cemeteries seem to have been the burial grounds of people drawn om a wider area than a local community: the number of barrows found ong the South Dorset chalk ridge is too large to have taken the dead from e surrounding area alone.[105] The more exotic grave goods were selected ainly for qualities of colour and texture, being shiny, lustrous or cool, and made of gold, amber, jet, faience, bone or shell; the most common type of l was beads.[106] The individuals interred with them – usually male where e bodies were unburnt – might have been chiefs, or priests or shamans, or mply unusually respected family or clan elders.[107]

Once more, our complete ignorance of the nature of the society which ade the graves leaves each possibility open, though there is now broad greement that, in Wessex as across Britain, those mounds which received

ccessive burials were probably used by particular lineages or kinship oups.[108] There is also an increasing tendency to reject the idea – which ggott himself favoured, and which was dominant until the 1970s – that the ople given these rich assemblages of goods were warrior aristocrats. There as always the possibility that the burial of such valuable objects could elf have prevented an accumulation of wealth and power by inheritance, d that the people given them were individuals who had gained especially od reputations among clusters of equally important family-based groups. recent study of the objects from the 'Wessex Culture' graves has revealed at some were freshly made but others had been in use for long periods. his does make it less likely that the goods were all the property of the ople with whom they were buried and more that some at least were put to the graves by mourners or ritual specialists (who can be termed iestesses, priests or shamans according to taste). Some seem to have longed to ceremonial costumes and equipment rather than having been mply tools, which makes that last possibility, of ritual deposition, the more kely.[109]

It also seems that in some areas round barrows were used as territorial arkers, in the manner which was once suggested of the long barrows. long the valley of the River Welland, near Peterborough in the East idlands, large specimens, often within multiple ditches, were constructed enly at half-mile intervals; as if the lush pastures there were divided up ually, and the dead positioned to oversee this agreement.[110] The barrows at the Wessex culture created were linked directly to the older ceremonial onuments left by the Neolithic, clustering notably around the great stone uctures of Avebury and Stonehenge. In the Nene Valley of orthamptonshire, round barrows were also placed near older structures, in eat number: hundreds of mounds, or ring ditches without mounds inside, ere made there in the centuries around 2000 BC. A few had no human mains at all, and animal bones and pottery were put into others without y reference to the burials. It seems as if the mounds and circular ditches ere becoming shrines in their own right, replacing the henges which were longer built as the main communal places for religious ceremony.[111]

Some round mounds in England were built to make reference to rrounding geography, so that one at Towthorpe, on the East Yorkshire alk hills called the Wolds, was made of earth from the immediate vicinity d from two other areas a mile or two to the north and west. Joanna Brück s suggested that these locations may have been significant in life to the rson buried there, or to specific groups of mourners; it may also be ggested that the mound could have been a sacred entity in itself, nbodying particular spirits of place.[112] The groups of small round cairns mmon in the uplands of northern England and southern Scotland metimes cover burials but frequently do not, having deposits of flint and arcoal instead. The latter kind have commonly been thought to have been ere dumps of stones cleared from pasture land nearby to improve grazing, t this would not explain either the material laid in them or the fact that ey were built with the same care, and in the same style, as the burial irns.[113] Sir Cyril Fox's perception that round barrows were more than just rial places, published back in the 1950s, seems justified now more than er before, and can indeed be applied to the whole phenomenon of the und mound by the second millennium BC.[114]

Interpretations

It is time to ask what explanations experts have offered for the apparent rge-scale changes in ritual behaviour between the fourth and third illennia, and to do that involves first taking a wider view of the approaches the interpretation of the evidence for ritual in Britain in recent years. Two nverging movements, both under way by the 1980s but becoming fully veloped in the 1990s, have been most influential in this respect. The first cognitive archaeology, the study of ways of thought of past societies based their material remains, which can provide the symbols used by people in ose societies to depict their world. It does not claim to recover the meaning those symbols, but to demonstrate how they were used in a particular ntext: in other words, to show how the people concerned had been inking even if it is impossible to know what they actually thought. Since uch religious behaviour leaves evidence of symbols behind it, this ethodology held out the hope of providing insights into the nature of that haviour, even if the belief system behind it might be lost.[115] Ironically, the

cond movement, post-processual archaeology, was initially conceived as a action against an older school of scholarship, which viewed archaeology imarily as an anthropological science and of which cognitive archaeology as itself one of the most recent outgrowths. It tended to call for a plurality interpretations, which put the modern interpreter into the foreground of vestigation and called into question the ability of archaeology to produce al and definitive accounts of the past.[116] None the less, it also took a keen terest in symbolic behaviour, and believed that operations of the human ind could be perceived at work in material remains, even if in most cases e meaning of those operations could not be recovered. By the mid 1990s e two sub-disciplines were effectively working together or being mbined.[117]

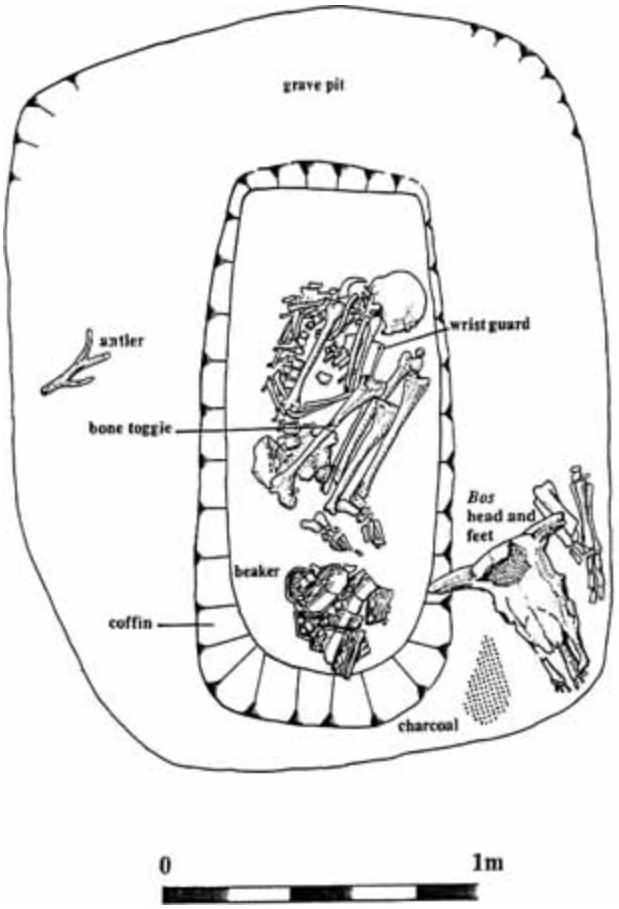
The effect of these developments was greatly to quicken interest in cient ceremonial monuments, and the apparent remains of ritual, in itain, and to encourage a large quantity of new investigations of them and blications on them; but there were limits to the effect. For one thing, the pact of theoretical developments on the practice of archaeology has ways been muted: the author of one justly popular and admired textbook the discipline commented in 2010 that most of his colleagues across the orld probably retained a 'crude and reflective empiricism', holding that ta could speak for itself without the need of an intervening theory.[118] For other, the archaeology of religion tended by its very nature to become sentially what Colin Renfrew, its main exponent, dubbed the archaeology cult. In other words, it could recover the material remains of ritual action special buildings, furniture, equipment, images and decorations, and traces feasts and offerings – but not (usually) the ideas which inspired them or en the actions, let alone the words, associated with them.[119] To recover at much is still, as Lord Renfrew emphasized, a considerable accretion to owledge – the solution to the question 'how' – and yet the 'why' timately remains the more important puzzle, and the answer continues to ude us. The traces of religious rites are moreover often not easily stinguished from those of political, social and festive ritual; if indeed there as ever a distinction to be made. In the case of periods near the end of ehistory, or in the early centuries of the historic period, textual evidence, ntemporary or back-projected, has regularly been used to interpret

ysical remains. One of the themes of this book is, however, that such empts are usually fraught with peril, while another is that material objects an apparently religious nature for which there is no known written planation continue to feature far into the historic period; indeed, until odern times. No wonder, therefore, that ‘religious’ material culture is a tegory of great ambiguity, little amenable to definition, and that an expert uld still describe the archaeology of religion in 2004 as ‘the poor cousin of chaeological research’.[120]

With this in mind, the examination of explanations for the great changes ritual that seem visible in Britain from around 3000 BC can commence. ne traditional one, which was based on nineteenth-century scholarship, is at they were caused by the arrival of a new people, who brought the use of etals and various novel kinds of artefact as well as a new religion. The ctorians established that the tomb-shrines were earlier than the henges, one circles and round barrows, and decided, on inadequate skeletal idence, that the former were the work of a smaller and more primitive ople. Both of these ideas, the former indisputably correct and the latter t, were proposed between 1869 and 1871 by a doctor, John Thurnam, and the 1880s his model had become orthodoxy. It was embodied in the major rvey of British prehistory conducted by Sir William Boyd Dawkins, who bbled together the speculations of the ancient Roman historian Tacitus ith shaky comparative evidence from linguistic and ethnic patterns in storical Europe. On the basis of this work he awarded dark hair and eyes well as small size to the Neolithic builders of the tomb-shrines, and gave ond hair and blue eyes to the Bronze Age race which he held to have nquered and dispossessed them. These newcomers he identified as the lts, and declared that they had brought a religion based on the worship of e, evidenced in their introduction of cremation and of round shapes for onuments which imitated the solar orb: fire was, he argued, crucial to the etal-working technology which they also brought.[121] By the 1940s the lts had been reallocated to the Iron Age, as a fresh wave of invaders ring that epoch, and, for lack of any historical label for them, the nquerors who introduced bronze and the solar religion had now become e Beaker People. This name derived from the distinctive tall ceramic pots, ed as drinking vessels, which were commonly deposited in graves under

me of the earlier round barrows: they were a truly pan-Continental style of tefact, being found in the third millennium from Ireland to Hungary and enmark to Morocco. These so-called Beaker folk retained their primacy as e presumed agents of religious and technological change until the 80s.[122]

What removed them from the record was largely the achievement of ore precise dating for prehistoric remains, which revealed that the new rms of ceremonial monument appeared, as described, at the beginning of e third millennium, while metal artefacts and the other new forms of good rived gradually in the second half of the millennium. There was no idence whatever for the sudden incursion of a new culture from abroad, d in the early twenty-first century the application of genetics as an chaeological science has reinforced this conclusion, producing no sign of gnificant racial alteration in Britain during the Neolithic and Early Bronze ge.[123] Single burials, cremation, round barrows and the first appearance of etal all predated the arrival of the Beaker style of pottery. That came round out 2400 BC, with finer metal tools and pins, gold earrings and button vers, bone belt-rings and stone guards to protect the wrists of archers from e lash of their bowstrings. Even so, all remained rare until around 2250 BC, hen they were joined by a range of bronze artefacts, plus flint daggers, one battleaxes, antler spatulas, whetstones to sharpen metal tools, and nged and barbed arrowheads.



51 Excavator’s plan of one of the classic Beaker-culture burials, at Hemp Knoll, Wiltshire.

The process of development of new goods continued at the same rate to the second millennium: by 1900 BC beakers were already going out of shion, to be replaced by successive new forms of impressive pottery ssels. In the course of the new millennium bronze spears, daggers and rks were adopted, followed by rapiers around 1400 and swords, shields d harness for horse-riding about a century later. The wheel arrived in the me millennium. All these developments, however, took place in a religious ndscape that was little altered in its essentials since around 3000 BC: even henges were no longer built in the early second millennium, new round rrows continued to be erected near them. If there was a particular style of ttery associated with the new circular monuments of the third millennium was not beakers but Grooved Ware, that form of native ceramic which has ready been noted in Orkney and which during the first half of the illennium is found throughout Britain on ceremonial sites. With its stinctive linear, lozenge-shaped, zigzag, triangular, spiral, square, cross-

tched and chequerboard designs, this ware was the dominant elite pottery the Late British Neolithic.[124]

Just as in the case of interpretations of the Early Neolithic tomb-shrines, in that of the round monuments of the third millennium; as race and ligion departed as explanatory devices in the 1980s, so economic and cial determinism moved in. The new forms of monument and of burial stom were read as marking a shift from a society based mainly on llectivism to one in which individuals were more prominent. The former as thought to have been exemplified by the making of big communal uctures and the blending of skeletal material within the tomb-shrines; the ter by the widespread adoption of single burial and the prominence of new nds of prestige goods.[125] The problem with this model was that single rial, either as a one-off action or as successive interments in the same onument, had already existed in the fourth millennium (and indeed long fore), while the construction of huge communal monuments continued ter the adoption of the new goods. Julian Thomas has pointed out that ditional societies studied by modern anthropologists, such as Bali, are ten very complex in the significance which they attach to ritual, so that or example) an offering deposited in one sort of place by a member of one x may have a completely different meaning from exactly the same kind of fering made in a different kind of place by somebody of the opposite sex. eading simple explanations from Neolithic material is therefore likely ough not certain) to be wrong.[126] John Chapman has emphasized that a sire for exotic objects is evident in Europe since the Mesolithic, if not rlier, and merely elaborated as the Neolithic went on and developing chnologies and trade allowed a greater diversity of desirable products. ven societies with few apparent inequalities have valued unusual and ractive possessions. As a result, the concept that the Neolithic produced e birth of the individual in Britain has lost favour since the 1990s. None e less, the greatly increased number and complexity of commodities in the ird and second millennia would have demanded a much greater number of ecialist craftspeople, and of traders, than ever before; creating, if not cessarily the individual, at least more varieties of individual.[127]

It is possible to discern, behind these changing views of the problem, ajor shifts in modern British culture. One of the obvious experiences that derlay the picture of invasion by a superior race with a more effective chnology and a (literally) more elevated religion was that of the neteenth-century European colonization of huge expanses of the globe: its fluence has already been suggested in the Victorian portrait of the arrival the Neolithic. The consciousness of the threat of invasion from the ropean mainland was, however, also a powerful theme in the British entality between 1800 and 1945 (and indeed long before, and perhaps, in old War terms, for some time after). One of the most popular authors on itish prehistory during the mid twentieth century, Jacquetta Hawkes, plicitly stated that the fear of the landing of Hitler's army in 1940 greatly inforced her sense of the importance of violent newcomers in the ancient ory of her island.[128] The same model, however, of significant change being oduced by the arrival of new conquering peoples, had long been built into e legendary history of the peoples of the British Isles, such as the Irish *abhar Gabhálá* or Book of Invasions or Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History the Kings of Britain*. It is embedded in the Christian religion, in the count of the Israelite conquest of Canaan in the name of a divinely chosen ople, and in classical literature, in the tradition of the Dorian invasion of reece and the migration of Aeneas's Trojans across the Mediterranean to und the Roman race.

More worrying, in view of the complete abandonment of the invasion pothesis during the later twentieth century, is that invasions are a major eme of actual ancient history. As soon as Britain emerged into history, rts of it were occupied successively by Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Irish, kings and Normans. The Roman Republic was troubled by attacks from andering and warlike peoples from the north, including Gauls, Teutones, mbri and Lingurini, while the Roman Empire had to fend off more, until it mously succumbed to such incursions. Phoenicians and Greeks established aritime colonies across the central and western Mediterranean. Conquest one set of invaders, the Hyksos, brought down the Middle Kingdom of gypt in the early second millennium BC, and attack by another, the Sea oples, fatally wounded the succeeding Egyptian New Empire at the end of e same millennium; likewise, migrations and invasions from the

ighbouring mountains and deserts – by peoples such as the Amorites, assites and Aramaeans, destroyed successive states in ancient esopotamia over the same period. Ethnic groups in Europe and the Near ast seem, in fact, to have been in episodic motion and turmoil throughout e recorded ancient world. The undoubted arrivals of new goods and chnologies in third- and second-millennium Britain, however, are now cribed wholly to travelling salespeople, traders, friendly foreigners looking r work, or foreign brides or bridegrooms; pretty well much as such velties arrive in Britain at the present day. This picture certainly fits the parent archaeological and genetic record, and it may well be that erything did change as soon as history began. If such a remarkable change d occur, however, it deserves more consideration, and explanation, than it s so far received.

The socio-economic model of explanation for the changing styles of onuments can in turn be related to contemporary concerns. One of the atures of British (as of wider Western) society in the 1970s and 1980s was sense of the breakdown of former collective and communal systems of haviour and sartorial styles, in favour of a rampant individualism largely sed on new and rapidly changing fashion accessories. This same velopment seems to have been perceived – if not projected back onto – the ird millennium BC. Since the mid 1990s, there has been no widely accepted and model of explanation for the changes of that millennium to replace ose that have gone before, but a series of different conceptualizations stead. John Barrett has suggested that the very process of constructing the ge Wessex monuments of the mid third millennium, requiring as it may ve a continuous succession of project leaders, acted to create a new elite ho ended up in the rich graves under some round barrows.[129] Julian omas has reformulated the notion of the emergence of the individual into e in which simple fourth-millennium transmissions of authority through nship lines fragmented into multiple connections between humans and the aterial world.[130] Jan Harding has proposed that a sense of the sacred which d been centred on special places, and concentrated in the ceremonial uctures built there, gradually became refocused upon humanity: in that nse, round barrows would have been temples built by people to emselves.[131] Andrew Jones has viewed the transition from the fourth to

e third millennium as one from the honouring of multiple forebears to that a lineage traced to a single ancestor, and from the circulation of human nes to remember the dead to the use of goods for the same purpose. emation and inhumation (the burial of complete bodies) were likewise, in s vision, just different techniques for fixing the deceased in memory. In her words, the apparent changes were really just alternative ways of doing e same thing.[132]

Around the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, older tions began to resurface as well, though in different forms. Race has mained resolutely unfashionable as an explanatory mechanism, for vious reasons, and so has invasion. Richard Harrison and Volker Heyd ve, however, drawn attention to the pan-Continental scope of the changes at appear in the British archaeological record, so that round barrows and ngle graves were adopted all the way from the Ukrainian steppes to the itish Isles during the third millennium BC. They have linked these, and the read of the beakers and other new kinds of good, to a new ideology, spread wandering individuals and not invading groups. In their reading, this derlined the basis of personal identity and social position in an individual rson's material trappings, especially if those were exotic and imported jects, and venerated the sun as the focus of religion.[133] Sir Barry Cunliffe s also stressed that the same changes occurred all over Europe, and dicated a common set of new values, based on the individual and the ecific kin group, which were both powered by and stimulated further the velopment of social elites, larger and longer trade networks, and mpetition for luxury commodities.[134] Timothy Darvill has maintained a ger space for religious factors, drawing attention once more to the sudden edominance of circles as significant units of space and the greater concern r celestial movements, especially sunrise and sunset, in Britain from about 00 BC. He goes further, to find solar imagery in the motifs of designs rved on stone and incised on pottery in the same period, and even more viously after 2500 BC in the making of golden discs, which were parently worn on clothing like badges. He perceives a stronger interest in e moon around the year 2000, a suggestion already strongly made by chard Bradley.[135]

Such a plurality of opinions suits well a contemporary Britain based on a ultiplicity of ethnic, linguistic, gendered, religious and other identities, ıked by the concept of individual choice. It makes another good fit with cent modernity that most of them are essentially secular in nature, and ıplicitly celebrate individualism and diversity. Ideology is given more edit than before as a force in itself, which is appropriate to a world in hich it has come once more to feature as a motivation for conflict, placing class divisions; though there is still a reluctance to give too much edit to religious ideology in British prehistory, despite (or because of) its otency in much of the ultra-modern world. This reluctance leaves much of e changing symbolism of the Neolithic, such as the emergence of the circle the dominant shape, hard to explain, and when explanations are offered in ligious terms, they tend to be in the form of heavenly bodies, rather than of e deities to whom such bodies are commonly related in traditional cieties. Not surprisingly, changed modern times also find different cestral figures to admire. If there were heroic figures in the archaeology of e mid twentieth century, they were the people buried with rich goods in essex round barrows, seen as representatives of a warrior nobility fluenced by the famous civilizations of the Bronze Age Near East and uivalent to the figures of classical Greek mythology. Now the best-known rson in third-millennium Britain is the Amesbury Archer, generally ewed as a friendly European immigrant, expert in practical skills and ıowledge which the British natives found of exceptional value. His ippled leg, moreover, has given his image an additional poignancy, by abling him to be regarded as an example of how a person with a physical sability could – even in prehistory – emerge as a leading figure not merely a parent society but in a foreign one.

Alternatives

Virtually all of the interpretations of the ancient British past summarized therto in this book have been those of professional scholars, most erating within an academic environment or in public employment. In the e twentieth century there was also a flourishing complex of different adings of British prehistory, which shared certain suppositions, ıblications and leading figures, and which self-consciously set itself ainst the mainstream view. It gave itself the name of ‘alternative

chaeology' or the 'earth mysteries'. A consideration of it is a natural mponent of the work undertaken in this volume, which is concerned as uch with the manner in which the evidence for ancient ritual and religious lief has been regarded as with that evidence itself. As such, this exercise fers not only further insights into the relationship between archaeological ta and modern societies, but insights into the manner in which orthodox d unorthodox readings of prehistory have interrelated since the ofessionalization of archaeology.

Logically speaking, an unorthodox attitude to the prehistoric past could ly develop once an orthodox one had done so, which took a very long ne. In the first two hundred years during which British antiquarians took a stained interest in ancient monuments, between the early sixteenth and rly eighteenth centuries, there was no clear solution to the basic question who had erected them: the main contenders were the pre-Roman British tives, the Romans, the post-Roman British and the Vikings. Between the id eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries something like a consensus was hieved, that they were the work of the ancient British, led by their priests, e Druids, though also great argument over whether the latter were to be garded as admirable or barbaric, and how they fitted into the account of man development provided in the Bible. The first genuine 'alternative chaeology' arose in the mid nineteenth century, in the form of a tradition writers who argued that Britain's megalithic monuments had been made the post-Roman British after all. Its greatest proponent was an chitectural historian called James Fergusson. By the end of the century it d disappeared, having been crushed by the increasing evidence that the onuments concerned dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age, articulated by ever more cohesive and determined group of established experts.[136] In e 1920s a new dissident group arose, inspired by Alfred Watkins, a ealthy citizen of Hereford and respected local antiquarian, who thought at he had discovered a network of ancient straight trackways, which he lled 'leys', across the British landscape. His suggestion came to be jected by most experts in prehistory: not merely by those in the emerging tional cohort of recognized scholars, but by his fellow local enthusiasts of e sort who filled up county archaeological societies. They thought his raight roads to be impractical ways of crossing hill country, and the

onuments and other landscape features which he took as their markers to te from too many different periods. Instead Watkins attracted a following nong people interested in esoteric spirituality, mainly from the affluent iddle class, who saw a pattern of ancient wisdom in his lines; and, having itially regarded the latter as trade routes, he himself came to give this new ea cautious encouragement. The group concerned, however, disappeared in e 1940s.[137]

During that decade and the two following, a major shift occurred in the ofessionalization of the practice of archaeology. For the first time, it came a widely taught academic discipline, which provided a university gree as the most obvious route to a career in the subject. Over the same riod, amateurs, including landowners, lost most of the initiative in cavating ancient sites, which was reserved increasingly to the university-sed or university-trained experts. This emerging near-monopoly had the fect of making the professionals concentrate primarily on the actions and jects over which they exerted such novel control: excavation and the finds hich it turned up. Individuals with a keen interest in the ancient British st, who were unwilling or unable to ascend the academic stepladder, were esented with the choice of becoming employees and assistants to the new ofessionals, joining local societies which were still able to engage in cavation (but tended to follow the views and agenda of the professionals) else of striking out on their own. The third route could only lead into eas of activity which were relatively or absolutely neglected by the newly rmed archaeological establishment. There were really just two of those at had any importance: a study of astronomy and mathematics, and a nsideration of landscape features as these related to ancient sites.[138] Such course did not necessarily end in confrontation with orthodoxy, as the velopment of the study of prehistoric designs on rock faces – a very portant enterprise conducted mostly by amateurs – makes clear. It would so, however, if it were combined with a self-consciously counter-cultural ovement which rejected most forms of traditional and official authority, d that is exactly what arose in the late 1960s, to produce the most striking itish manifestation to date of ‘alternative archaeology’.[139]

It actually arose as a spin-off from one of the most dynamic areas of ıorthodox scientific enquiry in the 1950s: an interest in Unidentified Flying ɔjects. In 1961 a young man called Tony Wedd published the idea that atkins's leys might have been markers for the flight paths of alien acecraft, which must therefore have been visiting our planet for many illennia. There was, from the start, a strong religious and apocalyptic tinge his thought, as he declared that the extraterrestrials were now multiplying eir visits to prepare humans for 'a Golden Age of Peace and Justice' much ɛe angels or gods; indeed, he subsequently referred to them as 'gods'. He came friendly with a Surrey schoolboy, Philip Heselton, who founded a ey Hunters' Club and a *Ley Hunter* magazine to propagate it. Heselton in rn inspired a fellow pupil, Jimmy Goddard, who lectured on the subject for e next few years, and in doing so attracted the attention of a Londoner, hn Michell.[140]

It was Michell who brought these ideas to a much wider public. His first ɔok on them, *The Flying Saucer Vision*, in 1967, restated Wedd's views at uch greater length, holding that the development of the human race had en influenced by 'gods' from the sky, who had rejected it when it turned o greedily to material and technological goals. Those, he preached, were ɔw bringing it close to self-destruction, which could be prevented by newing contact with the gods, and in the process reactivating the ancient ly centres which had promoted such contact.[141] Two years later he ıblished the book which, more than any other, defined and energized the rth mysteries movement, *The View over Atlantis*.[142] This combined atkins's leys with the Chinese mythology of *lung mei*, lines of energy hich run across the surface of the earth and with which humans need to ve in harmony if they are to prosper, especially when placing buildings. In ichell's portrait, the leys had been laid out to harness this energy, which as magnetic and rose naturally from the ground. They had been the work a scientific and religious elite that had visited almost every corner of the anet and constructed a network of megalithic structures upon it to channel e earth energy for the good of humanity. This vision, like Wedd's, ıbodied a fervent religious feeling, which though not Christian was avily influenced by Christian models. It had the biblical belief in a former ıiversal, good and true system of belief and knowledge, which had decayed

cause of the unworthiness of later generations. Its tone was evangelical d apocalyptic, announcing the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, in which rants would fall, the power of ‘old magicians’ be destroyed, and the cient wisdom be restored. It presented the ancient knowledge of the earth ergies as having been granted by ‘revelation’, and the book concluded th the promise that a return to it would enable ‘the rediscovery of access the divine will’ and ‘the restoration of the Holy Spirit’. This religious etoric was combined with the spirit of 1960s’ ‘Big Science’, for to Michell e ley system had been both a partnership with divinity and a ‘great ientific instrument’ which united all races and nationalities.[143]

John Michell viewed professional archaeologists as active forces of position to this vital work of recovery, engaged in mere ‘treasure hunting d grave robbery’ and so personifying the evils of modern materialism.[144] e was, in fact, opposed to everybody who accepted the Victorian volution in attitudes to prehistory, which had overturned a view of the cient past centred on the Bible and Druids and introduced Charles arwin’s theory of evolution and the division of the past into successive es (Stone, Bronze and Iron) based purely on technological achievement. y contrast, he honoured scholars from the seventeenth and eighteenth nturies, who had emphasized the primacy of religion as a force in human fairs, and writers since then who had continued to believe in a universal, or least pan-Eurasian, system of ancient wisdom.

The View over Atlantis provoked a rush of publication in the 1970s and 80s, and with it an upsurge in ley-hunting. Two books from the early 70s may be regarded as especially important works in the maturation of e earth mysteries movement. One was *Mysterious Britain*, by Janet and olin Bord, which embedded Michell’s ideas, and those of contributors to e *Ley Hunter*, in a gazetteer of ancient sites.[145] As the title suggests, it essed the mystery presented by such places rather than preaching a essage drawn from them. None the less, one of the authors was certainly spired by personal religious feeling, having published a magazine article ree years before which informed his readers that they faced destruction less they repented their ways and accepted once more their place as ‘an tegral part of the Creator’s concept, with a definite purpose which he will

entually fulfil'.[146] The other book was *Quicksilver Heritage*, written by e new editor of the *Ley Hunter*, Paul Screeton, which developed Michell's ew of prehistory to suggest that the Neolithic had been an era in which manity devoted itself wholly to spirituality, only to fall from grace with e invention of metal-working. He suggested that the New Stone Age lden age could now be restored, as a 'new breed of Britons look to the untryside for a true vision of the past and find themselves also exploring e infinity of the mind's inner space'.[147]

The concept of earth energies blended well with other esoteric traditions, ch as a belief in the magical properties of numbers, and practices such as wsing.[148] Yet the leys remained the central idea and symbol of the ovement, and 'hunting' them its most popular activity. The basic tool was detailed map of a district, normally the one-inch version published by the rdnance Survey, across which lines were drawn to connect ancient and edieval structures, mostly but not necessarily religious in nature: the assic medieval monument concerned was a parish church, assumed to have en built on a pre-Christian sacred site. Ley-hunters were not, however, ually armchair theorists, but avid explorers of the rural (and occasionally ban) landscape. It may be suggested here that leys had a powerful mbolic significance: in a modern age which drove straight lines to connect ntres of economic and political power, in the form of railways and major ads, leys linked up centres of spiritual power from different periods. The ovement spanned the British class system, from John Michell, educated at on College and Cambridge University and possessed of an unmistakable trician hauteur, to Paul Screeton, a working-class northerner. It also anned the political spectrum, from the radical right to the radical left wing, d covered a range of other attitudes, from members primarily interested in ehistory to those primarily interested in alien spacecraft to those concerned ove all with the presumed earth energies. Another spectrum ran between e extremes of those who wanted to convince orthodox scholars of the erits of their beliefs to those who felt that communication with established thorities was pointless and that (perhaps) a revelation or a revolution ould overthrow those authorities in any case.[149] However, the pace and citement of the movement during the 1970s generally rendered such fferences relatively unimportant.

One of the most prominent individuals within it by the end of the decade as Paul Devereux, who succeeded Screeton as editor of the *Ley Hunter*. He as among those who were most anxious to produce objective evidence that usual geological or atmospheric emanations congregated at certain points the earth, and that these tended to be made the sites of ancient sacred ntres. To this end he became a founder member of the Dragon Project, tablished in London in 1977 to carry out ultrasonic and radioactivity tests selected prehistoric sites, mostly stone circles. These continued through e 1980s, and generated suggestive but not conclusive results: some circles r parts of them) produced unusual pulses or higher or lower than usual diation, but some did not, and there was no consistent pattern between ose that did; nor did the latter do so reliably. The presence of these omalies at particular sites seemed to match reports of strange lights being en there at night, but a connection between the two phenomena was not cisively demonstrated.[150] If professional scientists were difficult to attract ideas concerning the earth mysteries, then the attention of professional chaeologists was more easily gained: the problem was that it was hostile. actitioners of archaeology and history, confronted by an enthusiastic nateur or set of amateurs with an unorthodox idea, have virtually no actical incentive to test it. In most cases they may feel instinctually that ere is something wrong with it, based on their knowledge of the context ncerned, but to disprove it usually requires a significant amount of work, hich must be subtracted from their own research, and – if the result is gative, as expected – will attract no interest, and win no regard, from their ofessional peers. The only people certain to be interested in such a process testing are those who propound the idea in the first place, and who are kely to be aggrieved and resentful if the end result reached by the ofessionals does not confirm their hopes. It is far easier to ignore or deflect e challenge from outsiders, or to dismiss it in general terms.

This is what happened to the ley theory. In 1970 John Michell allenged the profession of archaeology to test it in the particular case of e westernmost peninsula of Cornwall, a self-contained area with many cient sites. He offered to donate a large sum to charity if proved wrong, t could find nobody willing to take on the work.[151] Instead, the editor of e main journal of British archaeology at that time, *Antiquity*, took to

ndemning ley-hunting along with other heterodox approaches to the past. his was Glyn Daniel, who was with Stuart Piggott and Richard Atkinson ıe of the three leading experts in the British Neolithic and Early Bronze ge during the mid twentieth century. He emphasized more than most of his ofession the need for its members to patrol the boundaries of acceptable ought, and to refute false ideas, but did not seem to recognize that he mself never took the time and trouble actually to refute them.[152] In the ords of Adam Stout, who has made the best study of the relationship tween orthodox and unorthodox archaeology of this period, Daniel ereby became a 'Demon King' to those in the latter category. In the early 80s professional archaeology did begin to engage with ley-hunters, chard Atkinson writing for the *Ley Hunter* and Aubrey Burl, who was nerging as a leading author of popular as well as scholarly works on itish prehistory, debating with John Michell and other leaders of the chaeological counter-culture, in print and in person. They did not do much ore, however, than state their general reasons for rejecting the ideas of ose with whom they debated.[153]

This situation ended dramatically in 1983 when two young chaeologists, Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, published *Ley Lines in uestion*, a full-length consideration of, and reply to, the evidence provided favour of the existence of the lines. They pointed out that not only were e markers chosen for leys constructed in many different periods of ehistory, but that when the monuments concerned were excavated, they ry rarely proved to have been built on the site of one from an earlier age. lthough most ley-hunters assumed that the alignments were Neolithic, ost of the structures which they took as markers for them were Iron Age or edieval. The two authors went on to argue that human occupation of the ndscape had littered it so densely with ancient and medieval constructions at the statistical chance that any line drawn between two would strike me more was high enough to put apparent leys within the bounds of ssible coincidence. They directly tackled Michell's case study of esternmost Cornwall, accusing him of including medieval crosses and tural outcrops in his definition of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments. ney concluded by stressing the ideas and characteristics that orthodox and orthodox attitudes to archaeology had always possessed in common, but

e overall message of the book was still that the concept of leys, as veloped in the 1960s and 1970s, lacked any basis in reality.[154] The book ovided the detailed and careful response of professional archaeology to the allenge of ley-hunters that the latter had been demanding, and logically ft them in turn with two different kinds of response. One was to redefine rth mysteries as pure mysteries, and the belief in earth energies which derpinned them as a matter of faith, which could be very real to believers ho personally sensed those energies as palpable and direct phenomena. is simply rejected further dialogue with orthodox views of prehistory, on e grounds that those who held them were too wilfully blind ever to rceive the truth. The other response was to accuse Williamson and llamy of failing to keep up with the latest findings and arguments of searchers into the earth mysteries, and strive to renew the challenge to chaeologists with still better data. Each was entirely viable in itself: the ouble was that they pulled in different directions, along a potential fissure tween rationalism and mysticism which had always been inherent in the ovement.

The former approach was immediately articulated by some responses to *y Lines in Question*, notably by Anthony Roberts, who had emerged as the ost outspoken proponent of the earth mysteries in Glastonbury, the town hich had turned during the 1970s into the national centre of avant-garde irituality. He declared that objective proofs of the ley system were not eded if 'the whole geomantic/geomythic rationale is the crystallization of e Divine patterns projected on to creation from the all-encompassing Will God', which only intuition could sense.[155] Indeed, a vague but deeply nbedded belief in energy-bearing leys became an enduring feature of some ands of esotericism, occultism and paganism associated with the British unter-culture, though not a fixed tenet of any one tradition among them.[156] ne other approach was urged most swiftly, lengthily and forcefully by Paul evereux.[157] In 1989 it was pushed much further in a book which he jointly thored with another leading figure in the earth mysteries movement, Nigel nnick, which argued that the movement could regain credibility among ciety at large only if it abandoned mysticism. They proceeded to offer a rvey of the use of straight lines in the landscape for religious purposes in fferent parts of the world, to suggest that such a comparative study might

ovide telling insights into visions of the cosmos which emphasized linear nnections.[158] In doing so, they were starting to veer away from a primarily uctural investigation of leys and a scientific monitoring of megalithic sites an interpretation of ritual lines as features belonging primarily to the alms of religion and folklore. This not only involved less of a collision ith archaeologists but proved in itself a more immediately productive area research. Devereux published a succession of books, which still ntinues, on this theme, but also on aspects of ancient ceremonial sites, in fferent parts of the world, which reflected their relationships with ndscape features, folk tradition, skylines and acoustic properties; all atters that could make a direct and relatively uncontroversial contribution knowledge.[159] In 1991 an article by him on the manner in which ghtlines from Silbury Hill connected with the surrounding landscape was blished in *Antiquity*, the scholarly journal in which, only a decade before, lyn Daniel had been publishing tirades against earth mysteries searchers.[160]

Likewise, Nigel Pennick went on to co-author a scholarly history of ganism in Europe, for a mainstream publisher, and is the sole writer of a ntinuing series of well-researched shorter books and pamphlets on ropean mythology and folklore, with the focus on geomancy and esoteric aft traditions.[161] Jeremy Harte, who had been the editor of the *Wessex rth Mysteries* magazine, has established himself as a distinguished storian of folklore and religious tradition, winning the Folklore Society's nual prize for his book on fairy lore.[162] Bob Trubshaw, former editor of e equivalent magazine in the Midlands, has published erudite books on ythology and folk custom as well as performing valuable work as a blisher and editor for others.[163] This convergence of their work with that archaeologists and academic historians was made easier by the new terest taken by those groups, from the 1990s, in subjects and approaches eviously more associated with earth mysteries researchers. In particular, chaeology had broken out of the mid-twentieth-century straitjacket of eoccupation with excavations and artefacts to embrace a relation of cient sites to their surrounding landscapes and ecologies and an ploration of the cognitive effects of colour, movement, sound and other nsory experience involved in encountering them: the former interest has

en considered above, mainly in connection with the work of Christopher lley, and the second will be treated in due course. Those earth mysteries searchers who had embraced Paul Devereux's route out of the apparent ıpasse produced by *Ley Lines in Question* would feel a great deal more elcome, and at home in, the archaeology that flourished around the turn of e twenty-first century than they had in the world of its predecessor. oreover, the earth mysteries movement had itself changed, as its key eoccupations of the 1970s ebbed gently away. It is not surprising that the *y Hunter* ceased publication in 1999, when the internet was providing an sier forum for the expression of views than magazines; but it is still oteworthy that its last editor, Danny Sullivan, proclaimed leys to be ead'.[164]

Of course this is a story which can be told in several different ways, even the present author. From one perspective, the tale of ley-hunting is one of classic modern religious movement, arising with an apocalyptic language hich appropriated some of the tropes of evangelical Christianity, flourished r a brief time, and then subsided into a set of motifs and assumptions tained by a particular subculture of believers. From another, it is a ıstrating tale of missed opportunities. The neglect of landscape and nsory experience by mainstream archaeology in the mid twentieth century as indeed a serious omission, which earth mysteries researchers could well ve remedied to the lasting benefit of knowledge. They might have carried ıt the sort of invaluable fieldwork that actually was conducted by amateurs ch as Ronald Morris and Stan Beckensall, in pioneering the study of ehistoric designs on rock faces. Misled by a fixed and dogmatic set of eas, however, they passed this by to focus on an attempted proof of beliefs hich were ultimately based on faith alone. It is no coincidence that the riters who came to be seen as the worst enemies of ley-hunting, Tom illiamson and Liz Bellamy, were among the first of the new generation of chaeologists who did explore landscape as a vital component of their ork. Williamson was to become one of the leading practitioners of this sub-scipline. In an article which defended their book, they expressed a wish at ley-hunters would turn to promoting an understanding and defence of e English countryside and of the human forces which have shaped it; they d set out not to destroy a belief in leys as a rival to their profession but to

ve it a fair trial as part of their attempt to promote the development of tter attitudes to the study of the land on the part of archaeologists.[165] They so commented, however, that the concept of leys had a 'poetic truth' to it, hich related to an older literature of love and nostalgia for rural England, d this is surely correct. Even those earlier works of the earth mysteries ovement which now seem most outdated and over-enthusiastic are still cognizable as possessed of a genuine poetic power, reflecting both a key oment in twentieth-century British cultural change and a long-term process the re-enchantment of the land which is one aspect of late modernity. rthermore, the activities that they represent functioned as an indispensable aining ground for a small but important group of non-academic scholars ho have made a genuine contribution to the study of folklore and ythology.[166]

What is very much a live issue is the potential set of relationships tween professional archaeology and those members of the public who are awn to the ancient past by feelings of religious and moral kinship: the very ople among whom a literal belief in earth energies remains one possible bset of ideology. For much of the twentieth century relations between the o were adversarial, and especially between experts in British prehistory d modern people who had taken the name and identity of Druid.[167] Since e 1990s it has been feasible to propose a mutual understanding between em, based on the more or less undoubted fact, strongly argued in the esent book, that it is impossible to determine with any precision the nature the religious beliefs and rites of the prehistoric British. It may fairly be gued, therefore, that present-day groups have a perfect right to recreate eir own representations of those, and enact them as a personal religious actice – of the sort now generally given the name Pagan – providing that ey remain within the rather broad limits of the material evidence (or, if ey choose not to remain there, honestly to acknowledge the fact). If there e many plausible ways in which prehistoric attitudes to the divine and pernatural may be imagined, then the reconstructions made by modern gans can represent viable, and even valuable, conjectures. If treated as ch, by both parties, then there is no necessary reason for conflict between gans and archaeologists. Indeed, there is much potential for a creative and nevolent partnership, if the former – while not able to claim any inherent

isdom or knowledge that automatically renders them superior to other embers of their society – prove their worth by making exciting, creative d inspiring use of the data steadily generated by the latter.

The Strange History of British Archaeoastronomy

Closely bound up with the story of the earth mysteries movement is that an academic one which, although quite different in its origins and nature, me to share a similarly fraught relationship with mainstream archaeology d to form something of an alliance with the earth mysteries as a result. his is the study of ancient responses to the heavens, known as chaeoastronomy or astro-archaeology. It was established in the 1970s and 80s, on a wave of excitement created by pioneering works in the 1960s. It as expected at that time to become an integral and important part of the vestigation of British prehistory. Instead it shrank into a small sub-scipline, isolated both from most archaeologists and from amateurs who ssess the same enthusiasm for the study of the celestial alignments of cient monuments. This is despite the fact that archaeoastronomy flourishes the present day in university departments in North America and the ropean mainland, and that two of the most influential developments in itish archaeology since the 1990s should have fostered a regard for it. One those developments is the rise of landscape archaeology; and the sky is t only a major component of any landscape but the only one which mains substantially as it was during prehistory. The other is the rise of gnitive archaeology, the study of the way in which ancient people rceived and experienced their world, and the sky must, again, have formed major aspect of both processes. However, astronomy usually plays, at esent, a minor part in the interpretation of archaeological sites.

The professional archaeologists of the early twentieth century were rtainly aware that some of Britain's prehistoric monuments had important ignments on the sky. The most famous were Stonehenge and Maes Howe, d there were others that have been noted in the present book. None of the aders of the new profession, however, were much interested in astronomy, athematics or engineering. This was partly because these are simply fferent disciplines, but also because the elements of them in prehistoric uctures seemed simple enough to require no special study. Occasionally

outsider had taken an interest in them, sometimes with spectacular sults. The most distinguished was the famous scientist Sir Norman ckyer, the discoverer of helium, who published a series of works on the tronomical significance of ancient monuments between 1894 and 1907. By udying the layout of ancient buildings he declared his discovery of a iversal ancient religion of sun worship, carried across Europe, as far as itain, by the Phoenicians.[168] In making this assertion he got various things rong, including the misdating of Stonehenge by almost a thousand years, d the declaration that the ceremony which opened the Welsh national ltural institution, the Eisteddfod, was four millennia old (it was actually vented by a brilliant fantasist, Edward Williams, in the late eighteenth ntury). There is no evidence that the Phoenicians ever got near Britain, d the buildings which Lockyer linked together in his universal solar ligion are actually unrelated.[169]

However, the decisive evidence to disprove each suggestion was not scovered until the late twentieth century, and in addition Lockyer found a mber of apparent alignments between specific monuments and the ovements of the sun which may be correct. The archaeologists of the early entieth century did not know what to make of any of his ideas regarding e human past, and most ignored them. A few dismissed them, and went rther, to reject all attempts to characterize ancient monuments in terms of tronomical orientation.[170] This approach seemed effective: as the century ore on, such ideas slipped from public view. None the less, Lockyer had spired a number of amateur astronomers to turn their attention to ancient es, the most significant of whom was Rear-Admiral Boyle Somerville. He und solar, lunar and stellar alignments from several prehistoric Irish and ottish monuments. He also identified a problem for archaeoastronomy hich had appeared as soon as Lockyer wrote, and has shadowed it ever nce. In his words, ‘discredit and derision’ had already been brought on it

> through the visionary ideas of some enthusiasts, who have tried to import into the subject far more than the cold facts of science can sustain; so that with them, we become confronted by numbers of ‘astronomer priests’, sacrificing to the Sun, singing psalms to the Moon, and saluting the Stars. Even the number of stones compassing a Circle, and the ‘cubits’ that are comprised in its dimensions, have been called upon to provide mystical figures and proportions

– an entire prehistoric arithmetic and astrology. It is no wonder, then, that the unmathematical, but otherwise scientific, archaeologist has repelled any suggestion of orientation in these ancient structures.[171]

Somerville published in the main journals of archaeology, but after his ath this momentum died away: by the mid twentieth century a few people ere still submitting articles on the subject to science periodicals and local wspapers, but they received little attention.[172] This situation ended amatically between 1963 and 1965, with a series of publications by Gerald awkins, a professor of astronomy at an American university, which lminated in a book entitled *Stonehenge Decoded*, which Hawkins co-rote with his friend John White.[173] It became a rapid bestseller on both les of the Atlantic, and continued to be one into the 1970s. Deliberately tched at a popular market, its claim to fame was that it represented the first tempt to apply computer technology systematically to a British prehistoric e. The authors declared Stonehenge to have been built with extraordinary ill as a calendar, and perhaps as a sort of computer itself, aligned precisely the movements of sun and moon and intended (among other things) to edict eclipses. They were respectful to archaeologists, and used their work, t clearly believed that it had now been surpassed, in determining why the orld's most famous prehistoric monument had been built. They also ggested that the prehistoric British had possessed scientific knowledge and ility unequalled until modern times. The result was a division of expert inion. One of the most respected British astronomers, Sir Fred Hoyle, sagreed with the book's calculations, but made some of his own which nfirmed the conclusion that Stonehenge had been a major scientific strument of great sophistication.[174] Some prominent archaeologists, pecially Richard Atkinson, condemned Hawkins and White for making nstant mistakes in their use of archaeology and employing inaccurate ans of the monument. They could not, however, refute the mathematical d astronomical reasoning itself, arguing only that it was not certain, and at different scientists seemed to be reaching different conclusions, based a selective use of data.[175]

The archaeologists concerned failed, moreover, to express their jections in populist works to rival *Stonehenge Decoded*, leaving a growing

neral readership to assume that the book's ideas were correct. In addition, ey had almost immediately to reckon with a more formidable challenger in e same field, a retired Oxford professor called Alexander Thom. He was a ry distinguished scholar, of engineering science, who had been interested the astronomical and mathematical aspects of prehistoric monuments ever nce the 1930s, and devoted many university vacations to surveying them, pecially in his native Scotland. From 1954 he began to publish his ideas on e subject, but in journals where only astronomers and statisticians read em.[176] Hawkins cited them and called for more publications from him, and was probably the example of *Stonehenge Decoded* which made Thom cide to write books on the subject himself.[177] These were the first works support the hypothesis that British prehistoric monuments were aligned on e heavens with statistical evidence from many sites, produced by extensive eldwork of high quality. What he argued from this was that the stone rcles and rows of Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain had primarily been servatories, for studying the night sky in particular with considerable phistication and precision. He also believed that these observations were ed to construct and maintain a general prehistoric calendar, of eight annual stivals. Furthermore, he contended that the monuments had been laid out ith marvellous mathematical ability, using a standard unit of measurement hich he termed the 'megalithic yard'.

Thom did not mock archaeologists for failing to perceive all this, but nor d he make any attempt to integrate it with their reconstructions of ehistoric culture and society. Instead he left it to his readers to decide hether or not the two could be reconciled, and many decided that they uld not, especially members of the burgeoning earth mysteries movement. John Michell and his fellows, Thom provided a classic example of an tsider who had shown the whole of orthodox prehistory to be flawed. His parent proof of an immensely learned and sophisticated ancient Britain ade an excellent fit with their quest for the rediscovery of primeval sdom, and they took him up as a hero.[178] Thom's own relationship with em was complex. He lacked their mysticism and their contempt for most ademics. On the other hand, his ideas, consciously or not, sometimes drew those of the counter-culture associated with the earth mysteries or inforced them. For example, his Neolithic calendar of eight festivals,

sed on perceived alignments in prehistoric monuments, corresponded actly to that used by modern Paganism. Although claimed by Pagans to be ehistoric by the time that Thom was publishing his books, it had actually en developed by the first modern Pagan tradition to appear, Wicca, in 58.[179] Its component parts were indeed found in Lockyer's work, but vided into two calendars, which he held had been used in successive ehistoric ages; and there is no evidence that Wiccans had used Lockyer hen developing their own system of festivals.[180] Thom also gave support the idea of leys, by declaring in 1971 that Neolithic engineers could rvey straight between mutually invisible points.[181]

His claims were of course a great deal less convenient to professional chaeologists, especially as they had no skills with which to test them. To that required expertise in astronomy, mathematics and statistics, and these ere all separate sciences. In 1975 Richard Atkinson became the first leader his discipline to declare acceptance of Thom's basic principle that egalithic monuments were bound up intrinsically with astronomical servations.[182] John Michell swiftly took full advantage of this opportunity, a book in which he exulted over what he called Atkinson's 'public nfession of his former errors' and termed him the first to abandon the inking ship' of conventional archaeology.[183] Michell made chaeoastronomy his key example of an apparent heresy which had turned t to prove established scholarship completely wrong, and become thodoxy itself. The lesson was that other unorthodox theorists, like ichell himself, would become the acclaimed experts of the future. By the e 1970s, therefore, two things had become clear. The first was that om's claims needed to be examined properly, by experts in all of the cessary branches of knowledge. Thom himself was now leaving the field, r in the mid 1970s he became too old to engage in further research. The cond lesson was that established experts in prehistory now had the ongest possible reason to hope for a disproof of his ideas. As the latter had en set up, especially by earth mysteries authors, as the test case of the lue of professional archaeology, archaeologists needed to face up to the st. None the less, two further factors weighed against any simple need, sire or ability on their part to defend their traditional attitudes against om's ideas. One was that, contrary to the assertions of some of their

itics, they could actually adapt to fundamental changes to understanding of e past both speedily and well. In exactly the same period during which ıom published his books, the revolution took place in the dating system for e ancient past, enabled by radiocarbon, which altered the whole prevailing terpretation of European prehistory. This was also brought about by ternal, scientific, research, and it was rapidly and effectively assimilated archaeologists. The second point to be emphasized is that a decision on e worth of Thom's theories could not be made by archaeologists alone. ıe span of expertise necessary for it required a coalition of practitioners, ost of them trained in disciplines other than archaeology.

It was this requirement that engendered the new academic discipline or nterdiscipline' of archaeoastronomy. It secured something like official cognition in 1979, when the *Journal for the History of Astronomy* created supplement for it. The first full-scale conference officially devoted to the w subject was held at Oxford in 1981, and in the course of the 1980s a set leading figures emerged within it. Some, like Douglas Heggie, were spected scientists, and some, such as Aubrey Burl, had an existing fame in chaeology. Others, like John Barnatt, Gordon Moir and Clive Ruggles, ere scholars who were in the process of establishing careers. None could considered as belonging to any existing archaeological 'establishment': e nearest to such a figure was Burl, who held a post at what was then a lytechnic. By contrast, Lockyer, Hawkins, Hoyle and Thom were all, or d been, prominent members of the 'establishment' of academic pure or plied science. A few of the new group of archaeoastronomers had personal nnections with Thom; indeed, Burl had collated some of his work for ıblication, with approving comments.[184]

Despite this, in the first half of the 1980s the group seemed to reach a nsensual, and negative, verdict on Thom's conclusions.[185] The whole of s mathematical theorizing was called into question. Stone circles which he aimed to have been laid out with marvellous precision could, it seemed, ve been built without that; and nor was good evidence found for his mmon system of megalithic geometry or measurement. The findings ncerning his astronomical alignments were more mixed. Many stone rcles and rows seemed to have no sightlines on any heavenly bodies, hich in itself seemed to overturn his central thesis. The associations

tween megaliths and stars could not be tested adequately because the latter ove so frequently and swiftly that no correlation could be proved without ving a more precise date for the construction of the final phase of a onument than present techniques permit. On the other hand, a significant mber of structures did seem to correspond to the movements of sun or oon, and some to both. This, however, fitted the traditional model of ehistoric society perfectly well. It had always been recognized that certain onuments had clear alignments on heavenly bodies, especially the sun. The fference was that these alignments were accepted as a component in the ligion or religions that had inspired the monuments, while Thom argued stead that the latter had been primarily observatories erected in accordance ith a scientific knowledge astonishing even by modern standards.

A close examination of the critiques suggests that Thom's claims were t, in fact, positively refuted. What they reveal is that, at each point, those aims were susceptible to challenge and alternative readings of the same idence: they were not 'hard' science of the sort represented by the rrection of the radiocarbon dating process. For virtually all professional chaeologists, this was sufficient to make it permissible for them to discard e claims as a contribution to the study of prehistory, and a signal to get ck to business as usual. By the end of the 1980s, the coalition of experts at had investigated Thom's ideas more or less dispersed, and only one ember remained to make a continued reputation in the field. This was ive Ruggles, who became the most respected archaeoastronomer in Britain ring the 1990s. As well as proving to be the most dedicated academic actitioner of the subject, he had also been the most inclined to emphasize e difficulties and subtleties in it. He had pointed out, for example, that ere are actually two different kinds of basic theoretical approach to atistics, which get significantly different results. He had recognized that parent scientific conclusions may not always match up to cultural realities. hen he investigated the stone rows and aligned pairs of standing stones in e northern part of the Hebridean island of Mull and in the Kilmartin Valley nearby Argyll, he found that all had a similar orientation. The only lestial event which matched it was the major southerly lunar standstill. hat worried him about this was that there are no traditional peoples on rth who have shown an interest in the movements of the moon along the

orizon. In this he perceived what he called ‘the fundamental problem … at evidence acceptable to a numerate scientist is of a very different nature om that acceptable to his counterpart trained in the humanities’.[186] This is point of central importance to the whole subject.

By the end of the 1990s Ruggles’s work effectively summed up chaeoastronomy in Britain for his academic peers.[187] He declared cisively against any high-precision alignments on heavenly bodies in itish or Irish prehistoric monuments. Instead he found evidence for rough symbolic alignments on either the sun or the moon, with regional aditions which inclined to one or the other. These were fairly clearly pressions of a belief system based on ritual and cosmic truths rather than ientific observation for its own sake. He also pointed out a logical flaw at e heart of Thom’s labelling of megalithic monuments as observatories: ehistoric farmers could determine the time of year quite easily by atching the horizon. They had no need for any markers to do so, let alone assive stone structures requiring considerable effort to build. In addition, uggles possessed the knowledge of anthropology needed to raise one rther concern: that many recent indigenous peoples have taboos against inting directly at things, so that all of the apparent alignments may have en deceptive. Equipped with such arguments, he opened the new century becoming Britain’s only Professor of Archaeoastronomy, a fitting symbol his pre-eminence in the field.

It seems that to many British archaeologists, Clive Ruggles’s views presented not just the end of the debate but the end of the subject, an effect atly illustrated in the case of Stonehenge itself. In 1996 a respected ademic historian of astronomy, John North, published a huge book in hich he suggested that most Neolithic monuments were aligned with ecision on heavenly bodies. Those from the fourth millennium, his gument ran, were linked to stars, while the enclosures of the third illennium, including Stonehenge to which he devoted most attention, were ientated more on sun and moon. North emphasized that the essential rpose of the structures was religious but still insisted that they embodied a ientific knowledge extraordinary for the time.[188] The next year, a mpilation of essays on the scientific aspects of Stonehenge appeared under

e auspices of the British Academy, and Clive Ruggles was invited to write at on astronomy. Without concentrating on North's book, he still managed answer all its arguments, holding that they were hard to prove and ggesting that Stonehenge had only one undoubted axis, based on the lstices, and a possible lunar component; and that neither required much asp of science.[189] In 2007 Julian Richards, a leading archaeological thority on Stonehenge, produced a book on the monument aimed at a oad readership and subtitled *The Story So Far*. This did not mention North all: he was evidently not part of 'the story'. Instead it summed up the ews of Lockyer, Hawkins and Thom as misguided, and introduced ıggles as 'the voice of reason', before quoting him at length.[190] Two years fore, Richards had written the latest version of the official guidebook to e monument, and summarized Ruggles's ideas as all that needed to be said out its astronomical aspects.[191] In 2009 the Royal Astronomical Society sued a booklet for the general public which summed up the relevance of tronomy to Stonehenge; it was written by Ruggles and colleagues who greed with him.[192]

To his credit, Clive Ruggles himself was clearly uneasy about the uation which had developed, and especially about the lack of interest in tronomy that British archaeologists had displayed since 1990. Many had ased, in fact, to give any special consideration to possible heavenly ignments at the sites they investigated.[193] He suggested three reasons for is. One was that archaeologists had a new enthusiasm, for landscape, hich had distracted their attention. A second was that archaeoastronomers ew their language from modern Western science, and so it grated on the rs of archaeologists as both ethnocentric and anachronistic. The third ason was that academic archaeoastronomy was contaminated in the eyes of ofessional archaeologists by confusion with what Ruggles termed a oming 'popular archaeoastronomy', associated indissolubly with a unter-culture.[194] It may be suggested here that there is truth in all three, ıt that each can bear some further consideration. Ruggles himself noted the gical flaw in the first: that the sky is part of the landscape which chaeologists claimed to be studying. The language of archaeoastronomy ay well grate on the ears of professional archaeology. What is possibly ore significant, however, is that so many aspects of archaeoastronomy

elf seem conjectural and inconclusive by now that archaeologists in neral – in the experience of the present author – shy away from it. A major ception to this rule in the early 1990s was the interpretation of an Early eolithic enclosure lined with wooden posts, discovered at Godmanchester ar Huntingdon. The excavators proposed alignments from several of the sts upon movements of the sky, only to have their suggestions slammed Ruggles himself as 'ill-advised', 'dangerous' and 'unconvincing', thus oviding an example potent enough to deter others.[195] In this situation, it is too easy for archaeologists to leave the whole problem to chaeoastronomers, even forgetting in the process to supply the latter with ta. If they take any notice of archaeoastronomy, then the default position is repeat the views of Ruggles, not because he is seen as occupying an treme, sceptical end of a spectrum but because he is regarded as the posite: as the main representative of a cautious and consensual position ith which virtually all archaeoastronomers should agree, even if some ould like to go much further. Articles on the astronomical alignments of onuments have continued to be published in British archaeological urnals ever since the 1980s, though they have been rare.[196] Occasionally, a w expert in archaeoastronomy has even appeared within a British iversity.[197] What is most significant is the lack of impression made by ch writings on mainstream works of archaeology.

The terms which Ruggles used for the more unorthodox forms of chaeoastronomy may also need some refinement. To call them 'popular' is rhaps questionable, as there is no sign either that they attract more public terest or enthusiasm than mainstream archaeology, or that they are presentative of the populace as a whole. Rather, they are generated by a latively well defined minority interest and subculture within the nation, hich indeed overlaps with counter-cultural movements but is distinct from e mainstream of them. The obvious source of this subculture is in the rmer earth mysteries, of which in some ways it is a continuation: now that y lines, drawn straight between ancient monuments on the earth, have rgely fallen out of fashion, interest has shifted to straight lines in the air, awn between monuments and heavenly bodies. This interest is propelled the same impulse which gave rise to a new interest in archaeoastronomy the 1960s: that to survey the sky is one apparent way of coming up with

w ideas about the prehistoric past which requires no excavation and no quaintance with current thinking about prehistory. The force that has given fresh vigour is the microchip revolution, which has provided exciting new ols such as software which represents the configuration of the night sky uring different eras of prehistory, and satellite pictures of sites. To give me sense of the current range of approaches, three different bodies of ork will now be considered as examples.

The first is that of Robin Heath, the most prominent and prolific recent gure in the field, author of a series of books since the late 1990s, and a ebsite.[198] He is an engineer who has taught at various colleges of further ucation and recently held an honorary research fellowship at the niversity of Wales, Lampeter: a reminder that the boundary between ainstream and 'alternative' archaeoastronomers is not straightforwardly ıe between academics and non-academics. His heroes are Hawkins, ichell and Thom, and in his earlier work he restated their claim to have oved the existence of a worldwide ancient scientific wisdom of awe-spiring magnitude. From the geometrical and mathematical properties of one circles, especially Stonehenge, he concluded that the builders used em to predict eclipses, calendar dates, tides and phases of the moon. He so asserted, in partnership with John Michell, that Neolithic people curately calculated the dimensions of the planet. In that earlier work he ade no attempt to integrate any of this information with the findings of chaeologists, and indeed had no time for the latter, dismissing them, llectively, as characterized by 'ignorance and prejudice'.[199] Instead the pporting evidence that he employed for his interpretations of easurements and calculations was taken from a personal reinterpretation of edieval Christian legends and of selected parts of the Bible and pocrypha. In many ways his work has been firmly in the older earth ysteries tradition, arguing both for an equal validity of the insights of owsers, ley hunters, sacred geometers, psychics and shamans' with those archaeology.[200] His most substantial recent book, published in 2007,[201] is extended defence of the work of Alexander Thom. It is much more spectful to archaeologists, though still interested in them only inasmuch as eir work relates directly to Thom's ideas. Moreover, he still clearly regards jection of those ideas as a sign of moral failings rather than simply a

fference of scholarly opinion, and other authors are treated in relation to em as heroes, villains and collaborators with villains. His principal villain of course Clive Ruggles.

Heath is, in my opinion, the most typical as well as the most prominent my three case studies. The others, in different ways, buck the normal nd. One is a recent arrival on the scene, a computer programmer called homas William Flowers Junior, who has published two booklets and more formation on a website since 2008.[202] His starting point is also the work of hom, but he has attacked it as inadequate and set out to demonstrate his vn surveys of Stonehenge and other major Neolithic sites to be superior. In rticular, he wishes to establish a theory that the monuments concerned ere designed to bring the sun and moon together to produce a baby sun. He turn shows no interest in the recent findings of archaeology. Instead he s announced that, on sending his conclusions to English Heritage, the dministrative body which cares for Stonehenge, he received a polite knowledgement but not an acceptance of his views. This caused him to ndemn archaeologists (in general) as 'stuck in the past'. It does not help e cause of 'alternative' archaeoastronomy in the world of professional chaeology that its practitioners seem to disagree with each other, while ing equally hostile to mainstream scholarship if it does not give in to their mands.

The last category presents a different sort of exception to the rule. It is presented here by two works, one a lengthy study of the developed ssage graves of the Boyne Valley which appeared in 2006.[203] The authors e Anthony Murphy and Richard Moore, a journalist and an artist from that strict. In many ways it makes a fit with the other case studies offered here. s inspiring figure is, again, Thom, and it proposes, after his manner, a large mber of alignments between the various monuments and the sun, moon d stars. It is also rooted firmly in the earth mysteries tradition, drawing raight lines on the ground between the sites and finding a giant figure cked out in the landscape. Likewise, it treats the ancient world as having isdom to teach the present. It also, like Heath, places an emphasis on edieval legends as supporting evidence for its claims. What is so unusual out it is that the authors have made every effort to understand chaeologists, to incorporate their findings, and so show respect for them.

ney never, in fact, abuse any opponents, and their work is proportionately ee of evangelical rhetoric; instead, they admit that their arguments are eculative and offer them as a contribution to a general debate.[204] The other ork in this category is a careful and detailed study of the astronomical ignments of the Avebury monuments, made by Nicholas Mann, another dependent researcher.[205] Once again, its inspiration lies in earlier authors the tradition, above all Thom and including Hawkins, North and Heath, ut it is generally respectful to and conscious of the contributions of chaeologists, and incorporates their data with its own. It presents its ggestions modestly and temperately, treating knowledge about the past as nolistic enterprise.

There is no attempt made, as part of this treatment of the debates over chaeoastronomy, to offer any contribution to the field itself: the author cks the necessary scientific qualifications. It is instead an exercise in ltural history, focusing on what those debates tell us about the modern itish, and perhaps even about the processes of history themselves. One ggestion to be made here is that the debates concerned provide support for e concept of great personalities as motive forces in human development. ithout the towering figure of Alexander Thom, neither academic nor pular interest in the field would have taken off as it did. The same story so acts as a reminder of the differences between approaches to data on the rt of scientists and of scholars in the humanities. It throws into high relief e basic problem of how truth can be established in scholarship, and pecially in the study of the remote past, which is a major theme of this ook. Perhaps, however, it is most revealing as a lesson in the power politics knowledge in the modern age, expressed here in the relationships between fferent kinds of professional scholar, between mainstream and fringe ltures, and between secularism and religion.

The Archaeology of Experience

One aspect of the recent sub-discipline of ‘cognitive archaeology’, has en to encourage a more sensual and imaginative attitude to the analysis of ehistoric sites. Francis Pryor, for example, has suggested that Neolithic mb-shrines were probably brightly painted, and filled on feast days with rfumed smoke, drumming, horn-blowing, cries and incantations.[206] One

›es not have to be a spoilsport to point out that this is a highly speculative cture: the paint is unproven and many chambers were too small to commodate more than one or two living people at a time. It is just as ‹ely that the Neolithic experience of these monuments consisted of a crawl to silent darkness full of the spirits of the dead. None the less, to think ›out them in such terms as Pryor did is in itself refreshing, and suggestive.

The sense of prehistoric monuments as places to be experienced as well studied has manifested in different ways in the years since 1990. One is as ‹omponent of the surrounding terrain, which intersects with the parallel ›w interest in landscape as a feature of archaeological investigation. In)96, Timothy Darvill summed up a growing mood by urging archaeologists general to stop regarding landscape as a purely physical entity, and to ew it as ‘socially constructed sets of values, categories and understandings at individuals and communities develop and impose on the environment’, hich were constantly mutating and being contested as relationships tween people and their perceptions of the world altered.[207] At this time ristopher Tilley was also developing his studies which highlighted the anner in which monuments related to the surrounding land. In addition to ose cited already, attention may be drawn here to his study of Bodmin oor in Cornwall, in which he suggested that the Neolithic ritual structures this upland, long cairns and enclosures, were placed to draw attention to e rocky outcrops, or ‘tors’, which crown it. To him, therefore, tors were on-domesticated megaliths’. The largest of the moor’s Bronze Age round irns, by contrast, were placed on hill crests themselves, as if to mimic or hance the tors: in his view, the Neolithic marked out powerful rocks but e Bronze Age ‘captured’ them.[208]

Similar recent attention has been paid to the use of colour on megalithic es. At the Scottish Clava Cairns, grey or white stones were placed in the bric of the mounds to face the directions of sunrise, red stones to face the nset, and black stones in the rear of the chambers.[209] In earlier Neolithic mb-shrines along the western British coast from Galloway to mbrokeshire, there is a common alternation in the composition of the ambers between rough and smooth, and rectangular and triangular, stones, well as of different colours; so texture and shape mattered as well as hue,

ven if there is no overall pattern, or ‘code’, in the oppositions across the gion.[210] This is a fine example of the realization of Colin Renfrew’s hope at cognitive archaeology will reveal how ancient people thought, if not hat. Attention has also been paid since the 1990s to the acoustic properties megalithic monuments, and here much of the significant work has been rried out by one researcher, Aaron Watson. In his person and his interests is a perfect example of an individual now occupying a space between hat had been the different concerns of professional archaeology and the rth mysteries in the 1980s. He has found several remarkable effects at fferent sites, though – once more – without a standard pattern. At the stone rcles of Stenness and Brodgar, sound was reflected back from the egaliths to the centre of the rings, while the chambers of some Orcadian mb-shrines enhanced the effects of drums and voices. At an Aberdeenshire cumbent-stone circle, the recumbent megalith generated echoes, while the ıge earthwork of the Avebury henge prevented sound from the interior ɔm reaching people outside, and vice versa. The inner surfaces of onehenge amplify sound and produce notable fluctuations in it.[211] There e obvious problems in building all this data straightforwardly into an terpretation of a site: prehistoric people may not have sensed things quite we do today and there is the major obstacle of proving that any of these fects were intentional. Joshua Pollard has summed up both the potential ıportance and the limitations of ‘acoustic archaeology’: that a Neolithic ɔrld without music is ‘inconceivable’, but that actual instruments have not ɔparently survived and that sites such as Stonehenge may have been places quiet veneration.[212] Yet he agrees fully that sound was always a part of ehistoric sites and deserves study with every other aspect of them.

As a result of the new interest in the colour and texture of British ehistoric monuments, one material has emerged as especially prominent, ıd apparently numinous: quartz. It has been noted that white was a voured colour in general during the Neolithic era in Britain, mounds being ɔmmonly constructed of chalk or other pale rocks, and chambers or circles ıilt of pale stone. The big henges at Thornborough in North Yorkshire, here the soil is dark, were coated in gypsum to lighten them. Of a piece ith this tradition, quartz pebbles have been found on many sites, especially tomb-shrines all around the Irish Sea, and also in many Bronze Age burial

onuments. Timothy Darvill, who first drew systematic attention to this ıenomenon, pointed out that although white quartz was preferred, red and eckled varieties were deposited as well. He wondered whether quartz presented a link to water, as its pebbles were usually found on beaches and river beds and springs, and so to the moon.[213] Ffion Reynolds has taken is further by pointing out that the same mineral has a sacred significance r traditional peoples in the Americas, Africa and Australia. Another of its operties is that it emits flashes or glows when rubbed, so appearing to be ive, and this would powerfully have reinforced its significance as a ıminous material.[214] Vicki Cummings has noted that in the tomb-shrines of e Irish Sea coasts quartz was often used to mark out important parts of the ıambers: entrances, rears or sides. She has repeated the possible sociations with water and the moon, while adding that the pebbles may so have represented skulls or eyes and that they would have reflected light, d sparkled, if the monuments were used at night.[215]

All of these subjects for study impinge on the larger question of states of nsciousness, dramatically highlighted by experts in the Palaeolithic in eir debate over the shamanic interpretation of cave paintings and carvings. ıe new popular taste for hallucinogenic drugs in the Western world during e late twentieth century engendered an interest in their possible use in ıropean prehistory, where again the work of orthodox archaeology and rth mysteries researchers converged. A representative of the former, ndrew Sherratt, and of the latter, Paul Devereux, proved especially active this.[216] Results were suggestive but inconclusive, as traces of opium ppies and hemp were found on Continental sites but not proven to have en used for ritual, as opposed to medicinal, purposes. In Britain, small ramic vessels commonly called ‘incense cups’, found with many Early onze Age burials, may have been used to burn such substances.[217] Pollen d seeds from henbane, a native hallucinogenic (and very poisonous) plant, ere found on Grooved Ware sherds at the complex Late Neolithic remonial site at Balfarg, in the Fife region of Scotland, but may have been truded on to them rather than contained within them.[218] Since the turn of e twenty-first century less has been heard of the subject, but attention ould still be paid to the almost certain presence of the mind-altering bstance most widely used by historical Europeans, including the British,

d indeed most commonly found among our species in general: alcohol.[219] e prominence of drinking vessels, such as beakers, among Neolithic and er prehistoric artefacts suggests that the owners had something nsciousness-transforming to put into them for special occasions. This, wever, is still apparently lacking in absolute scientific proof, and it is table that historic European pagans employed strong drink much more ten for nutritional and recreational than ritual purposes, and in the latter it atured more in the form of libations than for the specific aim of altering nsciousness.[220] Moreover, other liquids, such as milk, may well have joyed a greater importance both in diet and symbolism.

All these examples of a new taste for an 'archaeology of experience' ise the question of whether the convergence at many points of the concerns professional archaeology and the earth mysteries represents a coincidence an imitation. Since the 1980s, there have been occasional attempts by chaeologists to give space in edited collections to 'alternative' viewpoints their subject. These have partly been made in the cause of inviting better lations between the two traditions (especially over flashpoints like access Stonehenge), and partly because of the growing general consciousness in estern intellectual culture of the importance of a plurality of views on any bject, which is integral to the project of postmodernism.[221] More recently few academics, bridging the disciplines of archaeology and religious udies, have made a speciality of comparing and contrasting the viewpoints prehistorians, heritage managers, Pagans and practitioners of New Age irituality, and enabling dialogues between them.[222] It is difficult to see, wever, any clear examples of the transference of ideas and attitudes tween them, as opposed to a greater understanding and acceptance of fferent ideas. The new interest in experiential aspects of archaeology, after , apparently arose as a subset of the new cognitive sub-discipline, which as itself an academic reaction against older models of enquiry based on a owing sense of their inadequacy for changing generations. Yet it may still argued that there is a relationship, in that the earth mysteries arose partly a reaction against the perceived limitations of concern, and sensual idity, of mid-twentieth-century professional archaeology, and so did the gnitive strain of enquiry among archaeologists, a decade or two later. Both erefore actually do have more in common than a subject matter and a set

interests and responses, so it is hardly surprising that there have been so any correspondences between them.

A Time without Tombs or Temples

It has been noted that there was no sharp division in Britain, in terms of her social and economic structures or ritual activity, between the chnological epochs which archaeologists have termed the Stone Age and e Bronze Age. It has become increasingly obvious, however, that such a vision did occur in the course of the Bronze Age, and in the second illennium BC. As Richard Bradley has recently stated, all experts now ree that the Bronze Age no longer forms a single useful unit of British ehistory, but not on how it should be split up. The problem is that the aking of metalwork, the nature of burial rites and patterns of settlement d land division all altered profoundly in the course of the period, but not at e same time. Bradley himself suggested that the Early Bronze Age had ore things in common with the Neolithic, and the Middle and Late Bronze ge with each other. He dated the three periods of the Bronze Age as falling tween 2150 and 1500 BC, 1500 and 1100 BC, and 1100 and 800 BC, spectively, and therefore suggested that the main cultural watershed of the riod should be placed around 1500 BC. This latter suggestion seems now be generally accepted.[223]

Bradley also stressed that none of the developments which made the riod after about 1500 BC look different were themselves new, all having ade their appearance in the earlier second millennium or even before then. hat changed was that in the second half of the millennium they became minant. The generally mobile pattern of life, across open landscapes, hich had been carried on since the beginning of the Neolithic, largely came replaced by settlements of permanent houses, some of which obably deserve the name of villages or hamlets. The landscape was creasingly divided up, first into small fields and then by long banks which em to mark off territories or ranches. Round barrows became smaller and en vanished, to be replaced by flat cemeteries of cremation burials placed ceramic urns. Goods, especially metalwork, were placed much less often ith the dead and much more often in pits in the ground or (particularly) in atery places. Ceremonial monuments, of the sort that had dominated many

ndscapes since the coming of farming, became scarce or died out. Henges ere apparently no longer built in much of Britain by the second illennium, and there is little sign of continued use of most. Stone circles, hich are much harder to date, seemingly continued to be made in northern d western Britain (and in Ireland) throughout the Bronze Age, but more d more rarely, until their construction, and any activity at them, appears to ve ceased by its end. The same can be said of timber circles. Activity ntinued in and around the great monumental complexes of Stonehenge d Avebury during the early part of the second millennium, but not beyond Orkney, which had produced the most spectacular achievements of eolithic Scotland, turned into a backwater. For two and a half thousand ars, from around 4000 to around 1500 BC, ritualized activities had largely en bound up with the making of monuments, but thereafter they almost holly parted company with it.[224]

There are signs that this process may have involved the abandonment of stems of belief as well as modes of expression of them. In previous shifts fashion between forms of monument construction, such as those around e junction of the fourth and third, and the third and second, millennia, the w forms of ceremonial structure were often built close to the old, and little tempt was made to degrade or demolish the latter. As said before, this need t be an indication of continuity and respect, as the incoming ideologies ay have been appropriating sites associated with ideas that had been held fore, as part of the process of replacing them. However, the overall action as one of recognition and preservation of the old. From the later second illennium, this tradition was increasingly abandoned, as farming first croached upon and then demolished earlier sacred sites. Where the latter ere respected, they were also neglected: by the Iron Age the whole vebury complex seems to have been overgrown. During that age, across itain, henges, round barrows, cursuses and ring cairns were destroyed or utilated wholesale wherever they got in the way of agricultural or dustrial activity. Richard Bradley has made the most systematic survey of is process, in southern England, and found that the pattern of disrespect d demolition was constant from the Late Bronze Age to the beginning of e modern period. He found not a single clear example in his region of ntinuous use of a ceremonial site throughout the last two millennia BC.[225]

Such a rupture with traditional ways demands explanation, and one of e first areas in which to seek it might be environmental and economic terminism: a cataclysmic shift in the natural order could well provoke a oportionate alteration in belief systems. Certainly the weather deteriorated later British prehistory. Between the Late Mesolithic and Early Bronze ge it had been warmer and drier than at the present, perhaps equating to at of the modern south of France. From around 1800 BC it began to get lder and wetter, a trend accelerating after 1400 to reach a point around 700 which the British climate was apparently worse than at present. From 500 it began to recover. This long process of declining temperatures and creasing rainfall made its impact on landscapes which were already being oded by tree clearance and farming. The long process of removing oodland, which had commenced at the end of the Mesolithic, continued eadily through the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age until by the middle of e second millennium BC most of it was gone. With it were disappearing rge animals that competed with humans, such as the bear and the species huge wild cattle known as the aurochs: the bear would probably survive til the end of the Iron Age but the aurochs does not seem to have got that r. In places the very soil was disappearing too, being washed away from nds of terrain as different as the North Yorkshire Moors and the Cotswold lls by the second millennium BC. Complete new landscapes were being eated, such as heather-clad moors, and chalk downs of bare green turf. Sea vels began to rise and bogs to form, and human occupation receded from eas of upland in the northern and western parts of the island.[226]

Profound as these changes were – and, indeed, many of those in the tural environment have proved to be lasting – they were also slow, and lowed the peoples of Britain time in which to adapt. There is no definite idence that the climatic change resulted in an overall drop in population, opposed to a redistribution of it. The inhabitants of Britain do not seem ore impoverished at the end of the second millennium than at the first: deed the reverse, as continuing technological innovation produced ever ore elaborate kinds of bronze ware, and styles of pottery continued to utate. It is hard to say whether the societies of which they were the eations altered significantly, simply because there is no certainty as to the ture of those societies in earlier times. The abandonment of barrows,

irns and burials with goods, and the appearance of flat cremation meteries in their place, looks like a shift to greater social equality, but the creasing numbers of valuable bronze goods, many obviously items signed for warrior elites, suggest the opposite. What does occur, quite amatically, is a gradual but steady shift from putting energy into the nstruction of ceremonial monuments to investing it in the making of mestic and agricultural units, such as houses, field walls and boundary rthworks. As people increasingly settled down, the need for spaces set art for ritual and assembly, in which migrating groups halted at special nes of the year, seems to have died away.[227] It is possible to argue that the ecial significance of the circle, so evident in the ceremonial monuments of e third millennium, just became transferred to the domestic sphere in the cond, as henges and stone or timber circles were replaced by the undhouse as the dominant form of the new, permanent, dwellings. It was the Bronze Age that this sort of construction first became widespread and mmon, continuing to sustain its popularity for the remainder of British ehistory.[228] Such a hypothesis gains some strength from the example of skernick, a settlement on Bodmin Moor apparently occupied from around 25 to around 1265 BC and excavated in the late 1990s. It was built near a t of stone circles and rows put up in the earlier second millennium, and cluded three circular structures which have been interpreted as shrines en to the sky. A corridor running through the centre of the settlement site as marked with standing stones and may have been a processional way: it as if the activities formerly carried out in the special monuments nearby d been relocated to the heart of everyday life.[229] Likewise, the sappearance of metalwork from graves may only have represented a nilar transference of traditional rites, if it was now taken from the dead as ey were prepared for burial and placed separately in the ground or in ater.[230] The apparent dramatic change of belief represented by the andonment of monuments as settings for ritual may be illusory, with the me supernatural beings and forces continuing to be honoured in similar ays within new contexts.

What needs to be emphasized here is that the inhabitants of Britain, from e moment at which they began to reshape the landscape and erect pressive structures upon it, had never been truly static or conservative in

eir ritual behaviour. Even when lifestyles, technologies and environments ere barely altering at all, they carried out dramatic revisions of their remonial architecture. The latter had, indeed, been in a state of more or ss constant development and mutation ever since it appeared. After two d a half millennia in which so many varieties of monument had been eated, it may be that the only further innovation which could be envisaged as to abandon monumental constructions almost completely and redirect eative attention to the home and the farm. Certainly it can be argued that e change to a new and sedentary way of life invited such a reconsideration, t settled peoples have proved themselves repeatedly, and in many parts of e world, to be more capable of constructing massive temples and tombs an mobile populations. In one sense it is lame, but in other salutary, to mphasize that the shift in the expression of ritual behaviour which took ace in the second millennium BC was just the latest in a series which had mmenced as soon as the prehistoric British became builders, and had gone incessantly ever since. Their Christian successors were to observe a basic ntinuity in the form and use of ritual space, enforced by doctrine, which as unknown before the beginning of history.

4

LATE PREHISTORY

EARTHWORKS, PITS AND BONES

IN 2011, THREE experts on the Early Neolithic declared that the precision ith which dating could now be determined was so great that the fourth illennium BC might soon be deemed to belong to history rather than ehistory.[1] As a rhetorical statement it makes an excellent point, but many storians may be tempted to reply that it would only be true if henceforth e knew what the peoples of Britain in that millennium called themselves or ere called by others; what kind of political, social or religious beliefs they ld; what had motivated them to construct the monuments which they left hind; and (ideally) the names of some individuals among them and a rrative of the actions in which they engaged. Such data is only available ith the appearance of written records of some kind, which by definition ark the transition from prehistoric to historic times, and, this being so, story securely begins for the British in the twenty-first century exactly here it has begun for them ever since the Middle Ages: with the landing of e Roman general Julius Caesar in 55 BC.[2] Caesar departed for good in the llowing year, and the Romans did not return, bringing back history with em, until AD 43, but the gap is plugged partly by the existence of a native itish coinage bearing the names of tribal leaders, matched very slightly by casional Roman references to these figures.

The appearance of the Romans and of the coins are interlinked, and mark e development of a new and distinctive phase in the development of itish society, poised between the prehistoric and historic and known nerally in recent years by the cumbersome name of the Late Pre-Roman on Age. Whether it is still useful to speak in terms of such an epoch as the on Age in Britain, however, is a debatable point. It has already been served that the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age have in many ways ore in common with each other than the former has with the Early

eolithic and the latter with the Late Bronze Age. Writing in 2007, Richard radley drew attention to this, and suggested that, likewise, the Early and iddle Iron Ages formed one period with the Late Bronze Age, while the ate Iron Ages was better joined to the succeeding Roman epoch.[3] There is doubted truth in this perspective, and yet it will be argued here that, in rms of ritual activity, there is still merit in treating late British prehistory as nit, although one which adopts half of the proposed model and defines at unit as starting with the Late Bronze Age and ending with the Roman nquest. As the context to such a treatment, a sketch will be provided now what is currently thought to be the sequence of economic and social velopments over that span of time.

Technological developments could themselves be related to aesthetic and iritual factors rather than to the purely functional: thus, the appearance of etal in Britain during the third millennium BC was not only a slow business t one in which the new medium was at first often used for jewellery rather an tools. It is by no means obvious that gold or copper objects were perior for the performance of everyday tasks than flint, wood, bone or ttery, but they were attractive for their colour and sheen.[4] Bronze, wever, was both beautiful and stronger and more versatile than flint, and the Late Bronze Age, commonly thought to run in Britain from about 00 to about 800 BC, it had come to dominate the economy and its working d reached a peak of technical perfection.[5] Just as before, it was employed r a succession of new goods: by the thirteenth century, socketed axes and mmers, saws, chisels and anvils, by the twelfth, leaf-shaped swords and rcular shields, and by the eleventh, sheet-metal cauldrons.[6] As Sir Barry nliffe has emphasized, the warrior equipment thus developed, of spear, ashing sword, socketed axe and round shield, was found all over Europe at is period, reflecting a new degree of interconnection across the Continent. shield retrieved from an Irish bog is identical to one carved upon a stone ab in Spain, while a sword found in the Shetland Islands is very similar to e depicted on the same Spanish slab. This must reflect an intense mobility, people, objects and ideas, which was itself probably driven by the rongly restricted occurrence of the ores needed to make bronze (copper d tin) and so the need to gain access to them and their products.[7] In 2010 e of the wooden ships that had carried them was found in the bay at

ılcombe, Devon, where it had sunk in about 900 BC. It was up to 40 feet bout 12 metres) in length and still held a cargo of copper and tin ingots, d a sword and ornaments, which together derived from Iberia and the lps, and possibly from France as well.[8] Rivers would have functioned as e main highways of the time, along which goods could be moved easily by ɔat, but wheels are recorded in Britain from around 1300 onwards and ɔuld have assisted mobility by land: landscape archaeology has now tected many droves and trackways dating to the period.[9]

It is possible that the need to acquire bronze by trading other ɔmmodities compelled the increasing intensification of farming which is ain in the record of the time, as the Late Bronze Age landscape was vided up ever more carefully into fields, ranges and settlements. Fortified rcular enclosures appeared in areas of southern and eastern Britain, which ay have been residences for local leaders, or else trading posts for the cality. More clearance of woodland took place on good soils, and beans d rye were introduced, with new species of wheat and barley. A salt dustry developed to preserve food for travel, and tools suggest increasing xtile production. All this activity took place against a background of ɔntinuing climatic deterioration, which forced agriculture out of more areas the ground became waterlogged, forming peat bogs in uplands and coastal arshes in lowlands.[10] It is still not easy to decide how society was ganized, because the lack of richly furnished burials or obvious high-status vellings seems to imply a lack of social hierarchy and distinction, and ere is little evidence of active warfare, but the large quantity of carefully ade bronze weaponry indicates the presence of a warrior elite. As a result, perts have divided over the matter, Francis Prior arguing strongly for an alitarian and peaceful British Late Bronze Age, and Timothy Darvill and mothy Champion for one dominated by a warlike aristocracy.[11]

There is no greater agreement on the transition to the Iron Age. To John ale in 2003, the distinction between the two ages was meaningless, as the ndscape of 700 BC was the same as that of 1200, while to Stuart Needham ur years later, 800 BC was ‘the great divide’ of later prehistory.[12] Once ore, they were looking at genuine differences in the data. The adoption of ɔn was certainly a slow business: it was worked in Britain from about 1000

: at the latest, and not fully adopted throughout the island until the fourth ntury.[13] On the other hand, the years between 800 and 600 BC were pivotal its impact, because it was then that the bronze trade collapsed, taking with the international networks on which it depended. Iron was not, initially at ast, an obviously superior metal, but it had the single considerable lvantage of depending on one type of ore, which, in Britain as in many her places, was found in many more localities than copper and tin. hether growing shortages of the latter caused a shift to iron, or iron oduction undercut bronze, is not known, but the result was a nsformation of Western Europe, including Britain, into more localized and ward-looking societies. The change coincided with the nadir of the parent climatic deterioration to produce about two centuries of apparent slocation. New centres for intermittent gatherings appeared in southern itain, represented by feasting sites which left large deposits of animal ne, pottery and metalwork, and large, lightly defended hilltop enclosures. e round forts had been abandoned after 1000 BC, and now many field stems and settlements were left derelict as well, with new linear rthworks cutting across the fields. There was a movement of population t of the East Midlands and Fens of England, which had thrived on the aterways which carried the bronze trade, and from the uplands of Britain, hich bore the brunt of the climatic downturn. Prestige goods declined in antity and variety, for the first time in two millennia, and an emphasis was aced instead on the control of land and of food production as the main urce of wealth. Domestic buildings, the roundhouses, grew larger and ore important.[14]

After about 600 BC the climate seemingly turned drier and warmer again, ver returning to the maximum achieved in the Mesolithic and Neolithic t reaching about the levels of the present day by the last century BC. wland settlement and agriculture expanded again, on to the heavier clay ils and into more areas of the chalk hills, indicating a growing pulation.[15] Increasing grain production meant that mice appeared in itain, followed by domestic cats, brought in to hunt them, while the open ndscapes allowed the brown hare to arrive in the island.[16] Settlements came more numerous than ever before, so that tens of thousands are now corded from the British Iron Age as a whole, and fortified enclosures of

any kinds were constructed in many parts of the island. Manufacturing came increasingly complex, although only a minority of those engaged in are thought to have become full-time specialists. Lathes and potter's heels were introduced, and glass beads and bracelets made. Rotary quern ones were developed to grind grain, and iron-tipped ploughshares allowed eper cultivation.[17] Society is generally agreed to have been relatively mmunal and egalitarian, the absence of rich burials, already apparent in e Late Bronze Age, now being accompanied by a lack of high-status oods, and individual fields being replaced by common land associated with ttlements, in which people lived, or at least worked or traded, as groups.[18]

All this, however, involves a very large amount of generalization, and e new emphasis on localism encouraged an even greater degree of regional riation than before. Timothy Darvill, with his keen sense of this factor, has entified five regions in Britain by the fifth century BC.[19] Between what is w the Welsh borderland and Kent, including the Cotswolds, Wessex and ıssex, was a zone full of fortified enclosures, with linear earthworks and attered farmsteads and hamlets. Southern Scotland looked very much the me. The Central and East Midlands and East Anglia were dominated by llages, hamlets and farmsteads, with few forts, and most of what is now rthern England was similar, but with linear earthworks and more closures, of walls or palisades, around settlements. The Atlantic coast of itain, from Cornwall up Wales to western and northern Scotland, was aracterized by fortified homesteads and different kinds of stone fortress. ıch distinctions in the human landscape imply social differences as well, ıt how these can be determined from the physical remains is not clear.

Every specialist on the period agrees that the British Iron Age should be vided, but there is no accompanying consensus on where the division ould fall. Some commentators partition it into two periods, with the line lling, according to individual taste, anywhere between about 400 and 200 .[20] Others insert a Middle Iron Age within that span, with its own aracteristics.[21] What everybody accepts is that Britain changed gnificantly between about 400 BC and the Roman invasion, with the erations speeding up towards the end of that time. Iron artefacts at last came common, and gold and silver objects were increasingly used, above

l coins, which arrived from the Continent in the second century BC and ere being manufactured in most areas of lowland Britain within two ndred years. Manure and crop rotation became features of farming, ainage ditches were dug and the manufacture of ironware, textiles, pottery, d glass and shale ornaments turned into full-time occupations for ecialists in several lowland areas. Valuable personal goods were ultiplying, and both objects and customs were showing an ever greater ndency to be imported from the Continent or influenced by styles from ere. Forts were generally abandoned, but those still used were made larger d more elaborate and imposing. Differences in wealth and social status nerged very noticeably within communities, especially in the south-east here kingdoms and aristocracies had developed by the time the Romans rived there. The Romans must, in fact, have been ultimately at the back of ost of these developments, as their cultural impact on peoples on the ntinent, and then their direct conquest of them, remodelled native cieties neighbouring Britain to make them more akin to those of the editerranean.

Once again, regional differences were considerable, and once more it is mothy Darvill who has produced the most elaborate mapping of them, viding Britain into three zones, radiating out from the point of closest ntact with Romanized Europe in the south-east of the island. The south-st itself, up to the lower Thames Valley, had coinage, many imported man or Roman-style goods and customs, a rich agriculture, and the largest ttlements, including some that functioned as combined political and dustrial centres. North and west of this area, as far as the limit of the idlands, and the Yorkshire Moors and Bristol Channel, was a zone that had naller settlements and farmsteads, numerous enclosures, and a greater nphasis on pastoral farming. Coins and objects of precious metal were esent, but goods tended to be locally manufactured. The rest of the island hibited much more continuity with the earlier Iron Age, lacking coins and ntinental manufactures, and indeed large central places of assembly. The ain social unit was still the homestead, with fortified enclosures being used r gatherings, while ornaments emphasized local and personal identities. ecent specialists have tended to stress how much of the island remained mune to Roman ways, and how even those who adopted some in the

uth-east adapted them to local circumstances rather than simply copied em; but the reconfiguration of British cultural regions which resulted from e impact of Roman fashions is still apparent.[22]

These changes in economic, technological, environmental, cultural, cial and political activities, over more than 1,200 years, had major plications for patterns of ritual behaviour, which will be discussed in the mainder of this chapter. First, however, it is necessary to consider a few nceptual problems that have emerged among those working on the British on Age since the 1980s. Between them these problems set the context for e manner in which much of the material data which has just been outlined ay be, and has been, interpreted.

The Problem of the Celts

For over a hundred years, until the 1990s, British scholars had no fficulty in characterizing the Iron Age of their island as ‘Celtic’. This was cause, at the end of that age and the opening of history, all of the nguages that can be identified as spoken in the British Isles belong to the eltic family group. According to nineteenth-century notions of nationalism, e three factors of language, race and culture intertwined to define an ethnic oup, and they certainly performed this function for the Celtic peoples of odern Western Europe in their struggle to preserve their own identity in the ce of the English and French. British scholars in general, therefore, cepted that the Iron Age British Isles had been Celtic in all three respects, d the only thing that changed between the nineteenth and twentieth nturies was the date at which the Celts were supposed to have arrived ere. In the 1880s, according to the scheme of the leading archaeologist, Sir illiam Boyd Dawkins, the Celts had ended the Neolithic and brought in the onze Age (as described earlier). This was refined before the end of that cade by an equally eminent philologist, Sir John Rhys, who divided them to a more primitive wave, the Goidels, who had introduced the Bronze ge, and a more technologically advanced and powerful one, the Brythons, ho had arrived later, in the Iron Age. As the former were the ancestors of sh-speakers and the latter of Welsh-speakers, this had the effect of ssociating all of the British from the Irish at a time when the wish of so any of the latter to leave the United Kingdom was creating considerable

nsion between them and the British.[23] This concept of the two successive eltic invasions then fossilized in textbooks of British prehistory, save that e honour of introducing bronze technology passed to the Beaker People in e early twentieth century. The arrival of the Goidels was relocated to the ate Bronze Age, the Brythonic Celts being credited with introducing a full on Age technology to Britain between 450 and 100 BC, together with that rvilinear style of decoration known on the Continent as La Tène art. In 45 the author of popular works on prehistory Jacquetta Hawkes could mpare the Brython warlords to the Norman barons who conquered much medieval Britain and Ireland.[24] For most of the late twentieth century, en though faith in the model of invasions as the force which powered itish prehistory waned, the concept of an Iron Age in which the British les were occupied by ethnic and cultural Celts remained standard. In the och of growing European unity, the concept of an ancient 'Celtic world', vering most of Western and Central Europe and with colonies as far as sia Minor, had a new attraction. The fact that the epicentre of this world, om which people and ideas had radiated out, was in the area between the hineland and the Upper Danube basin, seemed to lodge the ancient Celts mly in the heart of the Continent. The characteristics of ancient Celticity ere assembled from a mixture of archaeological data drawn from all over is range, medieval texts in Celtic languages, and the comments of ancient reek and Roman authors.[25] They were applied to religion as much as to y other area of belief and activity.[26]

Disquiet concerning this intellectual construct began to be expressed in itain in the late 1980s, when a few archaeologists questioned whether it ight not be impeding the interpretation of Iron Age data.[27] During the mid late 1990s, a full-scale attack on it developed, led above all by John Collis d Simon James. The essence of their case was that the word 'Celtic' had me to be applied to three different phenomena – to an ancient racial group, set of languages, and a style of curvilinear decoration – which interlocked create the modern concept of ancient Celticity. The problem was that the ree did not correspond exactly to each other in geographical area, and that ey had been developed as mental constructs independently and at different nes. Ancient Greek and Roman authors had spoken of Celts as a category people, but generally used the term vaguely to indicate barbarians living

rth of the Rhine delta, Alps or Danube; none provided any criteria for it d they disagreed over where the people for whom they used it should be cated. The employment of the word ‘Celtic’ to describe a group of nguages had occurred only at the beginning of the eighteenth century, by e Welsh scholar Edward Lhuyd; and most of the languages concerned rvived in the British Isles, where no ancient writer had placed Celts. The tegory of ‘Celtic art’ was a nineteenth-century one, first defined by the nglishman John Kemble in 1856 and achieved by linking designs found on on Age artefacts and monuments (from all over north-western Europe) ith those in medieval manuscripts and metalwork (mostly Irish). It was ly in the early twentieth century that the three semantic fields became mbined to define a single ancient pan-European culture and people, a step ken in 1914 by the Frenchman Joseph Dechelette. It was this combination at had become so deeply troubling to the revisionist writers of the 1990s, d especially questionable as a framework for the automatic interpretation archaeological evidence. It seemed too obviously a product of nineteenth-ntury attitudes of racist stereotyping which had continued under its own omentum into the succeeding century. None of these points undermined e validity of modern Celtic nationalism: the problem was that a thousand-ar gap divided the people called Celts in the ancient world from those who lled themselves Celts in the modern one, and they hardly overlapped in ography. It seemed best, therefore, for experts in Iron Age archaeology to andon the term.[28]

Reactions to these arguments were complex. The most immediate and ciferous opposition to them was mounted by a pair of Australian storians of art. They did not, however, produce more than articles and views to counter the large books of the revisionists, and by the mid 2000s ere falling back on the risky argument that archaeologists were still using her terms for ethnic groups culled from ancient literature, which were just open to challenge, and so ‘Celtic’ should be retained as well.[29] By the 00s British archaeologists generally accepted the revisionist argument, in me cases explicitly.[30] More often, they did so implicitly, by dropping the word and adopting some other term for the period, most commonly (as id) the colourless but exact one of the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age. In the ter part of that decade geneticists weighed in, and pronounced that the

idence of DNA showed no sign of any mass migrations from Central to estern Europe during the last millennium BC. On the other hand, they did t rule out smaller movements of peoples, or think the data wholly nclusive.[31] The new concern about the use of the term ‘Celtic’ for the Iron ge remained largely a British phenomenon, although at least one prominent erman scholar swiftly came to share it, and opinion among Irish colleagues as divided.[32] British specialists in medieval literatures in Celtic languages ere initially placed in what seemed to be a difficult position, but it was gely resolved by an influential essay published by Patrick Sims-Williams 1998. He recognized that Celticity was apparent to linguists but invisible archaeologists and that Celtic Studies needed to question all stereotypical sumptions. He also, however, asserted that linguists could indeed use the rm ‘Celtic’ with precision, even if it was not adopted for a class of nguages until modern times. To apply it to art or archaeology was more sky, even though it might possibly have some useful results; but the real ouble started when scholars tried to synthesize the languages, the art and e archaeology into a single construct, as had often been done. He ncluded that the label should not be used as ‘a short-cut from one scipline to another, or from one region to another, or from one millennium the next’.[33]

Perhaps the most creative reaction to the pressure of the revisionist case as that of Sir Barry Cunliffe, the archaeologist who had established himself uring the late twentieth century as the leading expert on the British Iron ge. He long placed his work within the traditional model of a Celtic world vering much of ancient Europe, but in the early 2000s he declared himself rmly against the idea of Celtic migrations or invasions, and a single Celtic lture, and above all against that of a Celtic race. On the other hand, he gued from good evidence for a kaleidoscope of cultures across Western urope, sharing a broadly similar set of languages and values, to which reek and Roman observers gave the name of Celts; the language group, in rn, was that to which modern scholars later applied the term Celtic. He en set out to propose an origin point for these languages and values, and und one in the trading networks which spanned Western Europe during the ronze Age, for which a common language would have provided a vital mponent. He believed that the differences between historic Celtic

nguages, and especially those between the Goidelic and Brythonic anches, would have been the result of the shattering of the Late Bronze ge trading system into more detached local communities at the beginning the Iron Age. He was now on a convergence course with an American nguist, John T. Koch, who had likewise decided that the languages later lled Celtic were fundamental to a new and better concept of ancient Celts. e also believed that the most likely place and time for their development as along the Atlantic seaboard during the Late Bronze Age, spread by tworks of gift exchange and travelling craftspeople, musicians and poets rough a patchwork of differing communities. In 2010 the two of them oduced a joint manifesto that summed up these ideas to create a new odel of ancient Celticity, which avoided all the problems of the old. stead of movements of peoples from Central into Western Europe it oposed the spread of a language, carrying with it some common cultural aits and values and brought by traders, performers and artisans, from the tlantic seaboard eastwards through Europe in the Bronze Age. One of its ltural traits was the form of decoration known as La Tène, which had been e classic ancient component of the construct of 'Celtic art' in the old odel. The modern analogy used by the two authors was not that of the uropean Union but of the United States, where different linguistic, genetic d ethnic groups are brought together within a single culture, many aspects which have been adopted far beyond its national frontiers. The word Celtic' was thus fully restored to the Iron Age map, shorn of all the cretions which revisionists had found most disturbing: in particular nliffe and Koch declared that 'the notion of race is unscientific nonsense' this context.[34] How far their new framework for the concept of ancient elts will become standard remains to be seen, but it represents the most luable and interesting attempt to date to find a fresh utility for the name.[35]

The departure of the idea of Celtic invasions or migrations has removed e disposition to believe in mass movements of people during later British ehistory. The landmark publication which dissolved faith in this belief has ten been identified as an article by Grahame Clark which appeared in 966.[36] This, however, was intended to stop the convention of ascribing rtually every cultural change in prehistoric Britain to the arrival of wcomers. It still declared that 'invasions and minor intrusions have

ıdoubtedly occurred', and proposed two major migrations as probable, that the Beaker People in the second millennium, and that of the Belgae in the ter Iron Age. The reason why this latter people was given a particular ıme was that Julius Caesar, describing Britain after his own two peditions to it, stated specifically that the coastal areas of the island were habited by tribes who had invaded and settled within historical memory om the neighbouring part of the Continent. The ethnic group from which ey derived (the homeland of which Caesar himself conquered) was the oresaid Belgae, whose name has been revived for the modern state of elgium.[37] Caesar's information on Britain was of varying quality: for ample he stated that the natives in the interior wore skins instead of xtiles and did not have agriculture, both statements being disproved by chaeology. As he did not himself enter the interior, but remained among e coastal tribes, it was their history that he was reporting when he spoke of vasions. He did not say, however, whether he was repeating what they emselves believed or surmising their origin from the fact that – as he ointed out – they shared the same names as Belgic groups across the ıannel. Either way, his testimony was taken literally by earlier experts in e Iron Age and is now disregarded by most of those at the present day. ıis is partly, perhaps, because invasions are unfashionable as motors for ange in British prehistory in general, but also because (as said above) the ıdoubted importations of Continental goods and customs during the later on Age seem to have been adapted to existing native ways rather than ıposed wholesale as might be presumed to be the result of settlement. This nclusion, though reasonable, does beg the question of how far settlers ight adapt to the habits of the peoples among whom they settled, especially the latter were not too different ethnically. Some specialists remain a little ıcertain on the matter: Colin Haselgrove, for example, has left room for the ssibility of 'limited' immigration from Belgic Gaul.[38] How limited ımigration can be before it becomes the movement of a tribe, or a section one, is probably another question that is impossible to answer; and there present the issue seems to rest.

The Problem of the Druids

The Druids were the leading experts in religion, magic, and other matters ncerning the supernatural among the Iron Age peoples of north-western rope who spoke Celtic languages, including the British; and that is all that n be said about them with absolute certainty. As such, they have exerted a werful hold on the modern imagination of the British, Irish, Germans, ench and Dutch, and their descendants in the New World. With the ception of the Irish, who kept Druids embedded in their native literature, ne of these ethnic groups paid much attention to them in the Middle Ages, hen they served no useful ideological purpose. Their emergence as major gures in national histories was very much a product of Renaissance manism, with its heavy emphasis on the recovery and close study of cient Greek and Roman texts. These provided scholars in north-western rope with the only written sources for their own early history (aside from e more generalized narratives of world creation in the Book of Genesis), d Druids featured in them as among the most colourful and (at times) pressive characters in the region. Accordingly, they became prominent in e histories that early modern writers developed for their nations at a time hen national self-consciousness was being sharpened by cultural change. e Georgian British came to take an especial interest in them, treating them the central figures of the religion that had inspired the megalithic onuments in which parts of the island abounded. They remained so until e nineteenth century, when the developing discipline of archaeology, with Victorian emphasis on race and invasion as motors of change, turned em into the priests of the last wave of prehistoric invaders, the Celts. The esence of Druids, indeed, became one of the features of the ‘Celtic world’ which twentieth-century scholarship allocated much of Western and entral Europe.[39]

The Druids are therefore very important characters in the cultural history modern Britain: but the place which they should have in its Iron Age chaeology is a much more contentious question. The problem is one of urce material, which falls into three categories. The first consists of the reek and Roman writers mentioned above, who present a number of fficulties in this respect. Their descriptions of Druids are brief, and in only o cases may have been eyewitness accounts. One was provided by the ading Roman politician Cicero, who met a single Druid when the latter

sited Rome. The other was from Cicero's still more famous contemporary lius Caesar, the single ancient author whose work has survived and who mself had the opportunity to observe Druids in their own society. His scription is therefore the most valuable, and also the most detailed, and fers to Gaul, the large region bounded by the Atlantic, the Pyrenees and e River Rhine, which he conquered for Rome. It has, however, long been garded by some scholars as beset by difficulties of apparent contradiction d possible distortion and misrepresentation. As a group, the ancient urces portray Druids in contrasting ways, while always making them lourful. To some, such as Dion Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, ippolytus, Diogenes Laertius and Ammianus Marcellinus, they were pressive philosophers and scientists, in some respects superior to those of e more conventionally civilized Mediterranean world. To others, notably iodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pomponius Mela, Pliny, Lucan and Tacitus, they esided over a savage and bloodthirsty religion with a special emphasis on man sacrifice, which any civilized person should regard with horror and vulsion. Caesar combined features of both pictures, portraying them as ving at least ambitions for great learning but exerting a dominant power in allic society which was essentially malign because of the brutal and perstitious nature of the religious rites in which they engaged.[40]

The variety of portraits of Druids thus provided by the Graeco-Roman xts, all eye-catching, provides a large part of the reason for their ractiveness to the modern European imagination, as they could be turned to heroes or villains according to national, political or sectarian taste. aesar stated that the system of Druidry originally arose in Britain and read out from there, but only one ancient author mentions any as active ere: Tacitus, who describes the Roman conquest of the large island off the orth Welsh coast which is known to the Welsh as Môn and the English as nglesey. On reaching its shore, the invaders encountered an opposing army hich included 'Druids, raising their hands towards the sky and shouting eadful curses' and 'women clad in black attire like Furies, with hair shevelled, waving flaming torches'. The Roman soldiers were initially ghtened by these displays, but recovered their nerve and launched a ccessful attack. Their brutality in crushing opposition was justified in their es by their discovery of sacred groves 'dedicated to inhuman

perstitions' such as the sacrifice of prisoners on the altars there and the use human entrails to divine the future.[41] The problem with this famous ssage is that we have no certainty of its reliability. Tacitus himself was not member of the Roman expeditionary force, and the nature of his formation may be located anywhere on a spectrum running from an curate eyewitness report made to him by the observer or observers, to a tion composed by him in order to embellish his narrative.[42] At the least, e reported amazement of the Romans on that occasion seems to suggest at they did not often encounter Druids as opponents during their conquest Britain.

The second category of material consists of medieval Irish literature, in hich references to Druids are much more abundant than in the Greek and oman sources, and which was, moreover, composed in a society to which ruids had been native. None the less, it has been used less often in the mposition of modern images of Druidry, partly because it is not as miliar to most Europeans (including the British) as the ancient texts, and rtly because it was not composed until Ireland had been converted to ristianity; in most cases, centuries after that event. The authors were constructing a vanished pagan world, and there are no means now of owing how accurate was the information which they employed in doing is. The spectrum of possibility stretches from a situation in which the riters concerned were possessed of a full and reliable memory of ancient sh society, conveyed through the intervening period by oral tradition, to e in which they had no real information at all and were relying mainly on eir own imagination. In recent decades, experts in the subject have gaged in prolonged debate over the matter, and, although agreement pears impossible, the sceptics have grown more prominent and confident ring this time.[43] The third category of evidence, that of archaeology, ffers from the problem of all material evidence: that it is of at best limited lue in reconstructing belief systems, whether religious, social or political. e ancient Druids have, as far as anybody is aware, left no writings of their vn, and not a single artefact has yet been discovered which can be equivocally linked to them. Modern scholars have, inevitably, interpreted e material record in accordance with the written sources described above, tered through their own beliefs and prejudices. As a result, their portraits

Druids have been as varied, and as lacking in objective proof, as those of her kinds of author.[44]

Since the twenty-first century began, there has been no sign that these fficulties are any nearer resolution. It may be argued that a continuing eoccupation of archaeologists with Druids as charismatic and alluring erary figures can have the effect of closing down discussion and narrowing tellectual horizons. In 1996 a cremation burial was discovered at Stanway, ar Colchester, in part of a cemetery used by local aristocrats in the years ound and just after the Roman conquest. It was notable for being companied by a set of surgical instruments, making it the earliest equivocal evidence for a medical practitioner in Britain, and some of the dest in the world; as such, it is of international importance. With the struments were a set of rods, which *might* have been used for divination, part of the diagnosis of an ailment. The various goods in the grave mbined native British objects with some which were clearly imported om the Roman world and some which mixed the styles of both: and the rgical instruments had features derived from British, Gallic and Roman lture. A number of possible cultural identities might have been determined r the owner, each set in the context of the partial adaptation of the native istocracy to Roman ways during the period of conquest. The excavation port, published in 2007, chose however to draw specific attention to just e – that he could have been a Druid – and this was taken further in the blicity which attended the launch of the report.[45] At the same time, mmentators on classical literature have inclined increasingly to highlight e untrustworthiness of the Greek and Roman texts on which archaeology s mainly relied for the identification of sites and objects as Druidic, and r their characterization of Druids.[46] What is needed is a proper discussion specialists in Iron Age archaeology of the place of Druids in the terpretation of material evidence, which takes fully into account all of the oblems stated above, and is informed by the recent studies of the literary urces and aware of the modern cultural context of varying reconstructions the ancient evidence. All of the necessary components now seem to be in ace for such a development.

It has not, however, yet commenced.[47] Instead, many experts in the Iron ge have tended increasingly to ignore Druids, and interpret the material mains of the period without reference to them.[48] Two of the greatest tablished scholars of the period have indeed taken account of the fficulties of integrating them into the evidence, but not – at least to the ind of the present author – in a wholly satisfactory way. The first is Sir arry Cunliffe. He has argued that, as some of the information on Gaulish ciety provided by the classical authors can be borne out by archaeology, eir portraits of Druids may be considered plausible. He has also suggested at although four of the best-known of those authors seem never to have sited north-western Europe themselves, they may all have relied for their ssages about Druids on a lost text by a traveller called Pytheas. He rtainly made a journey across most of the region at the end of the fourth ntury BC, and so his reports would have been eyewitness accounts.[49] The st suggestion is valid, but no more than suggestive, and the second raises interesting possibility which may never be confirmed. The second of the o distinguished recent writers is Miranda Aldhouse-Green, currently the ading expert in British Iron Age and Roman-period religious iconography, ho has published a large and exciting book which shows, with the greatest erudition, how everything that Greek and Roman writers said about ruids can indeed be matched to archaeological evidence left by the cieties which had contained these figures.[50] The problem, as she herself knowledges, is that every single piece of the material data concerned can so be interpreted in other ways. The argument of the book is really that though the deductions made are merely suggestive and speculative, and capable of proof, if enough of them are offered then an impression of obability will gradually be built up. Both works are full of fascinating eas and evidence, and certainly contribute to discussion; but neither gages in a proper re-evaluation of whether (and if so, how) literary idence and the material remains can be reconciled in a manner which kes full account of the problems of both and which can achieve a proper orking consensus among experts. They are more likely just to reassure ose who do not want to engage in such a re-evaluation.

One starting point for a reconsideration of the place of Druids in Iron ge society might be to compare the accounts provided by the ancient

riters, which mostly refer to Gaul, with those in the medieval Irish texts. ne Gaulish Druids, especially as portrayed by Caesar, are very much embers of a national order, produced by a long and rigorous system of aining and meeting in an assembly which represents all the Gaulish tribes. the Irish texts, however, the word *druidecht*, literally 'druidcraft', is mply a general term for magic. Anybody who works magic can be called a ruid while they are doing so, irrespective of what they are in the rest of the ory. Full-time magicians are therefore full-time Druids, but the category is tremely vague, as other kinds of professional, notably poets and smiths, n be the equals of full-time Druids in wielding magical skills. The Irish tegory of Druids is therefore extremely porous in a way in which the aulish one, at least as defined by Caesar, is not.[51] It may well be that *drai* *drui* was an ancient root word, in Celtic languages, for somebody who ployed and understood supernatural power; and was therefore applied by e Iron Age to a range of specialists in the various societies that spoke those nguages. Such a possibility is lent greater weight by the parallel example native Siberian cultures, as encountered by European travellers and nquerors between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries AD. Each had a mber of magical specialists with distinctive functions and often different mes, to whom European scholars proceeded to apply the blanket term of haman', taken from just one of those peoples to describe just one of those ecialists within it.[52]

Here again, the medieval Irish literature is of interest, for it contains veral terms to indicate varying sorts of magical practitioner and activity; d whether or not they accurately characterize those that had operated in an rlier pagan period, they do embody a sense of the complexity of the use of cane power in a culture which had once contained Druids.[53] If Caesar was t exaggerating the power and sophistication of the Gaulish Druid ganization for his own ends – and for more than a hundred years some holars have suggested that he was – then the Druids of Gaul were uniquely ghly developed; which would accord with the material and social culture Gaul in general. It is the glamour of his Gaulish Druidic society that holars have often projected on to Britain and Ireland in the past five ndred years. This is, not least, because Caesar's Druids make the best uivalent to the Christian clergy that the later British and Irish felt to be

ɾrmative for a religion worth respecting. One archaeologist, Andrew tzpatrick, has recently suggested that there is plenty of evidence for people ith religious knowledge and skills in Iron Age Britain, but little for a ecialist priesthood.[54] This sort of insight chimes well with some of the oughts offered above, and may represent one route past the difficulties of aling with the term ‘Druid’ in any meaningful way as part of Iron Age ɯdies.

It may be, however, that no consensus can be achieved over the matter. ɯring the past half-millennium, the British have tended (as most Western ɯropeans have done) to draw upon the ancient images of Druids and ɳphasize their benevolent and malevolent qualities according to taste and political or religious purpose.[55] Twentieth-century scholars, including chaeologists, continued this tradition in an only slightly more muted rm.[56] There is nothing inherently wrong with a situation in which different ɾiters prefer instinctually to believe different things about these enigmatic ɯd controversial figures, to attach differing degrees of importance and terest to them and to link them to different pieces of material evidence; as ng as the essential subjectivity of this exercise is fully recognized.

The Problem of Hill Forts

The most familiar and impressive monuments of late British prehistory e large enclosures, made by digging ditches and heaping up the earth or ones extracted into banks inside these. The dates that they yield span the st millennium BC, from the Late Bronze Age to the period just before the rival of the Romans, and they are a strongly regional phenomenon. To be ecise, they are found thickly in two zones: in England and Wales south-est of a line drawn between Ipswich and Chester, and across southern cotland from Galloway to Angus, overlapping into the northernmost parts England. The Isle of Man represents an extension of this second zone. In ɔth areas they look quite similar, but the Scottish and Manx examples tend lack ditches and consist of earth and rubble ramparts faced with stone. In e westernmost parts of the southern zone, in Devon, Cornwall and West ales, the jagged coastline produced a preference for ‘promontory forts’ or liff castles’, where banks and (sometimes) ditches were used to cut off eces of land protruding into the sea. Throughout their range, the different

nds of Iron Age structure called forts are some of the most spectacular rviving structures of the ancient British past. On the chalk and clay lands, e contours of their earthworks often crown hills and ridges like huge piled eeses or coiled serpents. On granite, grit, limestone and sandstone lands, the piled stone blocks of their walls loop around slopes under a coat heather, gorse or broom, or still show bare beneath the sky. Walkers in oodlands find their banks and ditches suddenly blocking the way. To most the heritage-conscious public, they are the definitive monuments of the itish Iron Age. In 1931 Christopher Hawkes gave them the label of 'hill-rts', which has stuck ever since.[57]

52 A fairly typical hill fort, crowning the Malvern Hills which divide Herefordshire from rcestershire. The inner and outer circuits of bank and ditch can clearly be seen terracing the slope.

It is hard to put an overall figure on their number, because the smallest of em can barely be distinguished from the enclosed farmsteads which were other feature of the age. A. H. A. Hogg's study, published in 1979, seems have been the most authoritative, and gives a total of 3,840 sites, making a small but notable proportion of the 20,000–30,000 such large and fended Iron Age enclosures found across non-Mediterranean Europe.[58] ne most famous in Britain is also one of the largest and most complex: aiden Castle, with quadruple ramparts which hug the contours of an olated chalk hill south of Dorchester, and mighty and elaborate outworks r the entrances. The total area enclosed is 120 acres (over 48 hectares). It

one of the prizes of English Heritage's National Monuments Collection.
) archaeologists, the most significant is probably another fort on the
essex chalk, this time to the north-east in Hampshire: Danebury, near
ndover. In 1969 it was placed at a potent convergence of developments –
e death of many of the trees inside from Dutch elm disease, the
tablishment of a dynamic new department of archaeology at the nearby
niversity of Southampton, and the decision of the county council to
velop the site as a country park – which enabled a major research project
ere. This consisted of excavations lasting for twenty seasons in succession,
rected by Sir Barry Cunliffe, followed by seven more seasons in which the
rrounding district was studied with reference to the fort, and trial
cavations mounted there. Its actual name was Dunbury, the dark fortress,
d the Danes were only brought in as a romantic Victorian alteration. In all,
out half of the total interior was examined, making it the most thoroughly
udied hill fort in Britain, and arguably the scene of the most important
vestigation to date into the British Iron Age.[59]

There is a fairly clear overall sequence in the construction of these
onuments. They were built in great numbers in the Early Iron Age, and
en many were abandoned in the middle portion of the period, while the
rvivors were usually enlarged and elaborated, sometimes dramatically. In
e Late Iron Age most of these were forsaken in turn, except in southern
essex, though some new double-banked enclosures were constructed.[60]
ntil the late twentieth century, archaeologists usually viewed them as the
ehistoric equivalent of medieval baronial castles: fortresses which
minated their areas politically, socially and militarily and formed the
mes and power bases of local chieftains, supported by war bands. Their
mber, and the strength of the defences of many, suggested that they were
e product of intense competition between such petty rulers, in a world in
hich social and political success were measured by military prowess: an
on Age indeed.

53 A drawing, from a 1930s aerial photograph, of the defences of Maiden Castle, the most nous of the ‘developed’ hill forts and one of the largest. The sheer complexity of these defences, ɔecially at the end shown, the western, is brought out from this angle, as is the manner in which they g the contours of the entire hill.

From the late 1980s this picture began to be questioned. It was noted that veral of the hill forts that have been excavated showed no sign of :cupation; that some were built in such high and exposed places – on oughshare escarpments, bare peaks and open plateaux, all raked by wind ıd rain – that they could hardly have been used in most seasons of the year; ıd that others were constructed in positions where they could be 'erlooked from higher ground, rendering them vulnerable to missiles. As id above, for most of the Iron Age, including the period in which most of ese structures were built, there is no evidence of an elite group of ıieftains and warriors. They seem instead to have been the work of peasant rmers who lived in scattered holdings and came together periodically for int enterprises like the making of these enclosures. Certainly towards the ıd of the age, when social, political and cultural traditions were changing ıder the impact of Continental models, especially in south-eastern Britain, ere is much more evidence of kingly figures and their retinues. By that ne some hill forts were clearly used as fortresses; but this was after most ıd been abandoned. Moreover, the strongly regional nature of the tradition gues in itself against a purely functional explanation for the structures: ɔm all the material evidence, the peoples living in the East Midlands, ɔrfolk and the Yorkshire Wolds (among other places) had the same kind of

ciety and military technology as those who made the ‘forts’, but got along rfectly well without building them.[61] Similar discussions developed over e purpose of the ‘promontory forts’. It was noticed that some were too nited and exposed to be good defensive positions, and the fortifications too eagre; and it was suggested that they might have been places set aside for ual instead.[62]

A consensus is currently emerging that variety is the key to the purpose hill forts, and that their use both differed between sites and altered over ne. Some look like enclosures employed mostly for ritual, some resemble rtified villages, and others seem to have been places for seasonal semblies such as fairs or lawcourts. Some were occupied for long periods, hers but briefly or intermittently. It is fairly clear that their often massive fences were in many if not most cases intended more for display than for actical military strength. Maiden Castle is so big that it is hard to imagine w its district could have supported a population sufficient to defend all its rcuits of walls. On the other hand, some hill forts were, at least for periods, nuine fortresses: the 11,000 sling-stones found stored in an ammunition mp inside Danebury were obviously not there just for show. The ramparts d ditches of most could be formidable military obstacles. However, as was parently the case in the making of so many earlier kinds of prehistoric onument, the act of communal co-operation involved in their construction ay have been the most important factor in the enterprise, leading as it did greater social cohesion and closer personal alliances. This would explain e number of hill forts that were apparently left unfinished: by this ckoning, they would still have served their purpose. According to this ew, areas which did not make the forts were occupied by communities that ere normally more closely knit, and did not have the same need to band gether formally for specific purposes and times. Although no overall odel of use for hill forts is possible, most that seem to fit the description nverge on three purposes proposed by Sir Barry Cunliffe: assembly, ttlement and storage. None the less, the patterning of them in the ndscape does point to a desire to control major economic operations, above l farming, trade and mining. This is a functional field in which power and timidation remain crucial, so that the term ‘hill forts’ may not be so appropriate after all.[63]

What relevance, then, do these impressive monuments – the greatest nstruction works in Britain for a millennium – have for a book mainly ncerned with ritual? The answer is already perhaps implicitly obvious in hat has been said above. Some of these enclosures seem to have had nctions that were primarily concerned with ceremony, such as gleborough in West Yorkshire and Carrock Fell in Cumberland – high, en and remote places not much suited to practical purposes but excellent r rites; especially in the former case, as it also contains cave systems. A w forts, like Figsbury on the Wiltshire chalk, had ditches inside the banks ke Neolithic henges.[64] The broader purpose attributed to most of these onuments – as places for periodic assemblies of people drawn from a rrounding region – would almost certainly have included religious rites, d indeed the assemblies were probably at seasonal festivals. The cattle and g bones found at Danebury seem to have been the remains of animals lled in early summer, probably at that great celebration of the coming of e warm season which is found in historic times under various names across rthern Europe, and is known in Gaelic as Cetsoman or Beltaine, in Welsh Calan Mai, and in English as May Day.[65] Moreover, as shall be nsidered in later sections of this chapter, hill forts are often rich in ritual posits and also contain structures which are interpreted as shrines.

54 One of the banks and ditches at the western end of Maiden Castle photographed to show their e and strength: the flock of sheep at the left-hand side gives some sense of relative scale.

There is, however, a wider frame of reference within which hill forts ay have things to teach about the mode of ritual thinking in the parts of itain in which they occur: that they are simply the most visually pressive aspect of a more general tendency of people in their areas to close places of significant activity. Farmsteads were given the same eatment, although their encircling earthworks were often dismantled after nstruction or remade in successive phases. These actions and those which ade hill forts seem to have in common a symbolic and physical rite of clusion and exclusion, defining those who carried it out as an independent d separate group.[66] Niall Sharples has recently taken this insight further, argue that in Wessex a Late Bronze Age of open settlements and small rms, in which enclosures were rare, turned into an Iron Age obsessed with undaries and barriers. He sees in this a fractured society filled with fear, d draws on the work of anthropologists such as Mary Douglas, who have udied such cultures in the recent world. They use ritual to constrain both ntacts with outsiders and individual behaviour, and are characterized by nsions which commonly manifest not only in a general suspicion and stility towards other groups but in accusations of witchcraft against embers of the same community.[67] Whether or not this interpretation is erstated, it makes a viable fit with the evidence.

In the currently prevalent view, therefore, the hill and peninsular forts of on Age Britain may to some extent be equated with the causewayed closures of the earlier Neolithic, the henges of the later Neolithic and the one circles of the later Neolithic earlier Bronze Age, as enclosed remonial spaces used mainly for occasional gatherings. In that sense they ere the last and the most imposing of these structures to be built in British ehistory. The parallel is not quite exact, as unlike those earlier classes of onument they were quite frequently used as settlements and (probably) for actical purposes such as the storage of grain, and their enclosing banks and tches were usually stronger, with a clear military potential and sometimes proven military role. None the less, it is close enough for them to be garded, to some extent, as ceremonial monuments. With that conclusion, it time to commence consideration of the actual evidence for ritual haviour during the period.

Deposits in Water

One of the most poignant moments in the cycle of stories surrounding ing Arthur, and one of the most famed in modern times, comes right at the d, when the faithful Sir Bedivere throws the king's sword Excalibur into e lake from which it first came, and back into the keeping of the pernatural female figure who presented it to Arthur. At first sight, a lake is odd place in which to find or deposit a sword, but it reflects a prehistoric ality, of the placement of weapons, and other pieces of metalwork – often ry beautiful – in many watery places in the British Isles. The presence of is motif in the Arthurian legend is probably not in itself a direct memory of cient custom, because it appears relatively late in the development of the gend, in the final part of the Middle Ages. It reflects instead a practical ality, of the finding of ancient bronze and iron objects in lakes and other et places. The apparently deliberate casting of valued items into water was t something new in itself by late prehistory, for more Neolithic flints have en found in British rivers than can be accounted for easily in terms of cidental loss. None the less, the scale, and seeming careful patterning of e deposits made from the Late Bronze Age until the Roman period were nuinely novel.

The patterning is partly geographical, because the finds concerned are ncentrated in England in some of the rivers that flow eastwards into the orth Sea: the Thames, Trent and Welland are all notable for them. On the her hand, other eastward-flowing Midland rivers, the Ouse, Nene and am, are not, and those that discharge into the English Channel, Bristol annel and Irish Sea have produced very few such objects, despite as orough an amount of dredging. Similar artefacts are found in former etlands in the East and West Midlands, but not in the bogs of the West untry. In Wales, the same sorts of deposit are found at the bottom of a few latively small lakes, and in Scotland in the River Tay and its tributaries gain, flowing east into the North Sea) and some wetlands in the Borders gion. Even in rivers rich in such finds, they are concentrated at particular ints: along the Thames, where field systems came down to the river, and t in the open country between, as if they consecrated sites of intensive man activity. The kind of object deposited is also specific to place: shields d cauldrons are found mostly in bogs and pools, swords in rivers, and

ears and body ornaments in both: though not the famous Iron Age neck naments of twisted metal known as torques, which were clearly prized but rely ended up in water. There is also a chronological patterning, for the ater hoards become frequent after 1200 BC, and remain common, with ords as the most favoured item, until about the year 400. There is then a table reduction in them (and this is the time at which hill forts were also ing abandoned in the uplands), before a further expansion after 100 BC, ith cauldrons now being most favoured.[68]

Two famous sites, on opposite sides of southern Britain and excavated in fferent halves of the twentieth century, may be used to exemplify the enomenon. One was discovered in the Second World War, when an rfield was being extended in Anglesey, a process which required peat to be t from the fringe of a small lake, Llyn Cerrig Bach. A tractor needed a tow pe, and the driver noticed a chain opportunely sticking out of the peat ncerned. It worked perfectly for the purpose, and two of the supervisors of e work, thinking it rather curious, sent it to the National Museum of Wales r examination. It turned out to have been made over two thousand years fore, to shackle slaves, and to have been one of a total of ninety metal jects, with a mass of animal bones, which people had thrown into part of e lake in ancient times. The metalwork, with a few of the bones, was sent turn to the National Museum, and the report written on them there by Sir yril Fox became a landmark in British Iron Age studies, as he revealed that ey had originated across an area extending from north-east Ireland to uth-east England. Many had been broken or damaged before deposition, d some were simply well used, but others (like the slave chain) had been excellent working condition. More recently the animal bones sent to Fox ve been carbon-dated to the fourth to the second centuries BC, suggesting at they began to be thrown into the lake before the artefacts, which dated om the third or second century BC to the second century AD. The animals d not been butchered beforehand, and so appear to have been genuine crifices rather than the remains of meals, even consecrated meals: it was moured at the time that human bones were also present, but this remains nconfirmed. The material therefore represented offerings made at the lake er a period of up to five hundred years, probably (though not certainly) in ccessive small acts of deposition. Whether they were the work of local

ople, or of pilgrims, is impossible to determine, as all of the metal objects uld have been acquired by the island's social elite.[69]

The second site was discovered in 1982, when archaeologists started to amine freshly cleaned drainage ditches in a patch of reclaimed marshland lled Flag Fen, on the outskirts of the East Midland city of Peterborough. d by Francis Pryor, they eventually dug out some three hundred pieces of etalwork, plus shale bracelets and pottery, which had been put into water ere over a period between about 1200 and 200 BC. The metal objects cluded weapons and ornaments, most of which had been broken before position, either to 'kill' their indwelling spirits symbolically, or simply to minish the probability that somebody else would fish them out and steal em. Some were very fine, others so badly made that they may have been shioned simply to be cast into the water. They were part of a monumental ndscape, for a line of about two thousand large oak posts had been driven to the shallow water between an island and the nearby mainland which had isted on that spot at the time. The objects had been placed on either side of is construction, while the posts themselves had been 'consecrated' with posits around their bases, which included loose human bones, a boar's sk and the bodies of dogs. The post alignment was erected in stages tween 1350 and 950 BC, so that the placing of objects on the spot clearly ntinued for a long time after the posts had decayed. The monument might ve been orientated upon some heavenly feature or towards a direction ade significant by mythology. It could have been a boundary marker tended to deter other humans, or else a magical protection against rising ater levels (which were indeed a threat to the district at this time). It may en have been a funerary monument, centred on the human bones, if they d belonged to very significant individuals. A museum and heritage centre ere duly built at Flag Fen, which became the best place in England for sitors who wished to learn about the Late Bronze Age; but they closed erhaps temporarily) in the economic recession at the end of the 2000s. nly a portion of the site has been examined, and Francis Pryor has timated that the total number of objects deposited there may number tween three and five thousand.[70]

55 Reconstruction of one section of the alignment of posts at Flag Fen, provided at the heritage ıtre constructed on the site and set in a marsh landscape similar to that which would have existed at time.

In 2001 Colin Pendleton launched a full-scale attack on the interpretation Iron Age metalwork found in watery locations in Norfolk, Suffolk and ambridgeshire as ritually deposited, which had some knock-on ıplications for the same idea as applied elsewhere. He described, in detail, ow recent that interpretation was, gaining momentum only from the 1960s d becoming an orthodoxy only in the years around 1980. He pointed out at only about 1 per cent of the total number of artefacts from the period hich had been found in the region had been recovered from rivers or pools, d in only one case were those concentrated in what could be called a oard. The rest were individual finds or in small groups, from dredged aterial and banks, and just one of these had beyond doubt been placed in ater at the time of deposition: the rest might have been eroded or washed to it. If they were not, then many or most might have been casually lost verboard from river craft. He concluded, resoundingly, that ‘there is no idence to support ritual deposition of metalwork in Northern East Anglia ıring the later Bronze Age’.[71] He may well be correct for his chosen gion, and his cautions could also act against too easy an acceptance of a remonial origin for much of the ancient metalwork from other rivers in stern England. Clearly, however, mass deposits such as those at Flag Fen

d Llyn Cerrig Bach survive them, and the selective and patterned nature of e deposits, discussed above, would also work against a general application such a dismissal.

Several possible explanations can be provided for the ceremonial acement of objects in water. They could have been part of a funeral rite, companying or in place of human remains; and where these wetland posits are found, burials do indeed tend to be absent. It is also notable that ost of the swords dating from the Early Iron Age that have been found in itain were dredged out of rivers, while most from Europe had been placed graves, suggesting that the two may have been equivalent. As stated ove, actual human bones were among the deposits at Flag Fen, and many ulls have been found in the Thames, a river rich in late prehistoric etalwork, and its tributaries. Those from the Walbrook, in London, were ted firmly to the Late Bronze Age, but, unhappily, most are not assigned any period, and many have been lost. Over a hundred were found in the ames itself together with one of the most magnificent, and famous, of all e late prehistoric artefacts and works of art pulled out of British rivers, the attersea Shield. All, however, may be from a different date or dates.[72] It is ie, moreover, that human remains were present with only a minority of the tefacts recovered from watery places, even when the latter have been refully excavated; and they become much rarer in the course of the Iron ge.

56 A representation of a Late Bronze Age funeral beside the River Thames, as imagined in the d twentieth century by the artist Alan Sorrell. The mode of burial is cremation, as fits the period, l the implication is that the burnt remains will be consigned to the river together with the gleaming ght (and so newly made) sword being brandished to the left. This is one plausible explanation for presence of Late Bronze Age metalwork in watery deposits.

It is also possible, therefore, that the placing of the objects in water ncluding the pieces of human being) could have been an act of worship, rected to water spirits or deities, at a time when the climate was indeed coming cooler and wetter.[73] Indeed, they could have been offerings to a oader spectrum of deities and spiritual beings, if water was regarded as a rtal between the terrestrial and human world and other kinds of world in neral. There is a specific reference in a contemporary text to just such a stom among a tribe in contemporary Gaul, who occupied the area around hat is now Toulouse. It occurs in the work of the Greek geographer Strabo, ho was quoting an older book, famous in its time but now lost, by the aveller Posidonius. The cult concerned the throwing of treasure into sacred kes, 'by way of invoking and propitiating their god'.[74] The account does t explain who the god concerned was, nor why water seemed to be a edium which he favoured, but it is valuable in establishing the existence of ch a practice. Posidonius visited the area himself, and also had access to a cord or records left by the Romans who had conquered it and looted the llion from the lakes. It may therefore be given better credence than Greek d Roman accounts of tribal peoples that were based on less secure sources experiences. However, this does not necessarily mean that the peoples of itain had the same motivation, of worship. To continue the catalogue of ternative explanations for the placement of objects in wetlands, they may en have been cast away as ritualized acts of destruction, rather than dication, to prove the wealth and power of the owner, especially if they d been captured from rival peoples who had themselves been punished or stroyed. Rivers can furthermore act as natural barriers as well as routes for avel and trade, and the placement of offerings in them might also have en an act intended to consecrate and strengthen them as frontiers which parated rival tribal territories.[75] It could have functioned also as a opitiation of the powers of water by people who were embarking on a urney across it and wished for good fortune. There is even a possibility

at it was not the element which mattered but the location: Posidonius corded that at Toulouse precious metals were thrown into the pools and led up on dry land nearby, both being within a sacred precinct. Treasure in ater is much more likely to survive the centuries until modern times than at deposited on the surface of the ground, rendering the former visible to chaeology but the latter not. Readers may choose whichever kind of planation makes best sense to them, or pick and mix, as all may have tained at different times and places and they are not mutually compatible.[76]

The landscapes of the waters of lowland Britain have perhaps changed ore since prehistory than any other rural environment. A few pockets of drained marsh survive as nature reserves, but gone for ever, to rich rmland, are the vast expanses of fenland, with the sighing of the wind in illions of green reeds and the feathery blond heads of sedge, and the histling wings of mighty waterfowl flocks; and encounters with more ectacular wildlife such as the swoop of the osprey or fish eagle, the oming of bitterns, the strut of courting cranes, the heavy flight of a lican, or the slap of a beaver's tail as it dives in the pool beside its dam. y sunlit day, they would have glittered with some of Britain's most brilliant tterflies, the swallowtails and large coppers, while by night the pale mes of ignited marsh gas, the will o' the wisps or punkies, would have nced above them instead. Lowland rivers, often dredged, embanked and raightened, bear only occasional resemblance to their ancient selves when ey would have been looped and braided watercourses, with many more ets, channels and meanders, and aquatic plants. The pools and lakes of the ghland zone are less altered, but by definition most of the specific amples in which ancient deposits were found have been drained or modelled, which is why the discoveries were made in the first place. Of mous sites, one of the least altered is Llyn Fawr in the Black Mountains of lamorgan, where cauldrons, axes, sickles, horse harness and cart or chariot tings were thrown in about 600 BC.[77] It still lies in wild scenery, set among umps of conifers with a tall crag beetling over its quiet waters; but it now s a concrete lip because it was converted to a reservoir. This was how, of urse, the hoard was noticed. The ancient objects presented to watery aces were probably once incidental accretions to numinous landscapes:

›w they are themselves often the most tangible and evocative testimonies the vanished primordial power of those aspects of British nature.

Deposits in Earth

Iron Age objects which may have been ritually placed in pits or shafts ıg into the ground are much more common in Britain than those in water, formerly watery places. At first sight, the chances that they were cidental losses, or displaced to the locations in which they were found by ıtural processes, are much less; but there are still major problems of terpretation. Where pits have very clearly been dug and then goods ·liberately placed inside them, this could have been to store or hide the ›jects concerned, which were then left there because the owners never turned. Where artefacts and bones are mixed together, they may simply present the burial of rubbish, and an apparent careful structuring in the yers of this could simply be the result of the sequence in which different pes of it were interred; or they may, on the other hand, bear witness to a e in which an entire cosmology was portrayed by the burial of different rts of material.

In the case of deposition in pits, even more than in that of the placing of ings in water, late prehistory carried on a custom which had long been ıacted in Britain: as must be clear from earlier parts of the present book, it ıd existed since the Mesolithic, and was one of the main expressions of ıual behaviour in the New Stone Age. It has been given more prominence accounts of the Late Bronze and Iron Ages largely because of what was ng presumed to be an absence of ceremonial and funerary monuments ıring that period, but the burial of selected objects was another of the main atures of the age. Many more pieces of its metalwork have been recovered ›m the ground than from water: just one hoard, at Isleham, where the hills East Anglia come down to the edge of the Fens, contained 6,500 items.[78] ıousands of buried collections of Bronze and Iron Age artefacts and bones e known from the British Isles. Francis Pryor has suggested that many of e tools in them may never have been made to be used at all, because worn-ıt items are rare and so are finds of tools in domestic buildings: this ggests that many of the items recovered from hoards may have been eated purely to be buried.[79] Richard Bradley argues instead that some of

em seem like stores of unfinished objects, perhaps pieces of scrap metal vaiting the forge. He urges the abolition of any boundary between a ritual d a utilitarian purpose when interpreting them: objects found in ritualized ntexts had often played practical roles. Nor is it certain that metal-working as regarded as an everyday and secular activity. It if were not, then hoards sociated with industrial processes may have carried a numinous charge st as those placed in pools or rivers did. The blacksmith's craft could have en accompanied by rites which required that a certain proportion of the aterial used was turned into a religious offering. Bradley suggests that as th ritual and functional aspects of metal deposits often involved broken jects, it is impossible to distinguish between them.[80] This view of ithcraft has also found support with Richard Hingley, who has drawn tention to the fact that in some recent African societies it is still regarded a magical and impressive process. He thinks it likely that the process of n-making, from the gathering of the ore to the end of the artefact's use, as seen, like agriculture, as a cycle of regeneration.[81] Francis Pryor has ted that Late Bronze Age swords which had broken along flaws in the sting were not just melted down again, but deposited, as though the object d acquired a proper identity and required burial.[82]

The locations in which objects were placed in the earth had strong gional variations. On the coastal plain of Sussex and Hampshire they were d near settlement sites, while on the chalk downs behind they were rmally along watercourses, but never (in sharp contrast to the situation rther north) in water itself.[83] Deposits were also made frequently in stern and southern Scotland and the north of England, personal ornaments edominating in the north-east of Scotland and weapons in the English rthern zone, while the south of Scotland had a great variety of metalwork d pottery. In the Scottish north-east they were mostly interred in ttlements and in the south of the country in water, while in northern ngland they are found in both, and in caves and on beaches. The north-stern Scottish and northern English finds are in small quantities, and so rhaps the work of households, while those further south are much larger, d hence may have been the work of tribes or tribal confederacies.[84] In rthern Scotland objects were laid over long periods at certain special cations. One was High Pasture Cave, a complex, stream-fed cavern on the

le of Skye, where domestic material was left in careful deposits between e fifth and first centuries BC. It included crafted bone and antler objects ncluding a bridge from a lyre and tuning pegs for it, the oldest stringed strument yet found in Western Europe), animal skeletons, especially of gs (split into right and left halves) and pottery and stone instruments. In e fourth century a stone stairway was built into the cave, to facilitate visits, d when it was finally sealed up around 100 BC, the body of a young oman with a newborn baby and a foetus was left among the blocking earth d stones.[85]

In Wessex and the West Country, deposits have been found inside pits thin hill forts, and in their ditches and under their ramparts, as well as at rious places on settlements. They often consist of the skulls or other eces of animals, and sometimes whole bodies, especially those of horses d dogs, the two kinds of beast most faithful to, and beloved of, humans. attle, pigs and sheep are most common, horses and dogs rarer, and wild imals even scarcer, perhaps because they were not regarded as sacrifices because they had not made personal relationships with people. There are so quite a lot of human bodies or bones.[86] A total of 2,399 pits was entified by Sir Barry Cunliffe's excavations at Danebury, meaning that the hole site probably had around five thousand. Of these, 1,707 were amined and about a third of them were found to have held deposits: the tter included a quarter of a million animal bones and a similar number of otsherds. It is possible that those that were apparently empty had been ven libations of beer or mead as offerings instead. Sir Barry noted that pits side hill forts were not identified as associated with ritual until the 1940s, ving formerly been taken for dwellings, and then for granaries. They seem ten to have been used for storage, presumably of grain, and the deposits ere generally made when the use of them ceased, as if to thank the divine owers of the earth for protecting the commodities temporarily placed in em. When the offerings had been made, the old pit was filled in and a new e dug and put to practical use. Grain keeps well in the ground, but equally above it, and for less effort if the ricks that hold it are well maintained, ompting Sir Barry to suggest that storage underground might have seemed ractive because it symbolically returned the harvest to the care of the ities or powers that had grown it. Such pits tend to be found in areas

hich in the Iron Age were dependent on agriculture, while water deposits e found in those where trade was apparently more important; but grain was so grown in the West Midlands, Wales and the Scottish Borders, and orage pits are rare there. Those at Danebury were especially abundant in eep bones, but also held significant quantities of cattle, pigs, horses and gs, and had single or group burials of humans, either interred whole or presented by a part or parts of the body. The animals were sometimes not en skinned, let alone butchered, so that they must have represented true crifices; unless they had died of diseases that made their hide and flesh spect to their owners.[87] Less than 2 per cent of the bones found in the anebury pits were of birds, but of these almost three-quarters were ravens, d most of the rest belonged to the closely related carrion crow; and these o species were deliberately interred in at least twelve other English Iron ge sites. They are the most intelligent and among the largest of British rds, and have spectacular flight displays: ancient and medieval myth make em symbols of communication. They are also traditionally associated with ttlefields, because of their taste for carrion, which in addition caused them keep close to human settlements where they fed off some of the organic bbish. They may even have had a funerary function, in picking clean man bones before burial.[88] These overall patterns are highly suggestive, t it is worth bearing in mind that no two hill forts may have been alike in eir deposits. At South Cadbury near the southern fringe of Somerset, 362 ts were located in the interior and a sample of them had animal bones and man skulls. At Hunsbury in Northamptonshire about three hundred were scovered in the nineteenth century and found to contain huge quantities of onze and iron metalwork, plus glass and pottery, and over 150 stone erns for grinding grain.[89]

During the 1990s, late prehistoric rubbish itself came under scrutiny as idence for ritual behaviour. David McOmish looked at Late Bronze Age d Iron Age sites in Wessex which had been interpreted simply as middens, d decided that they were deliberately preserved and deposited cumulations of debris from feasts. A wide range of materials had been lected from these special events and piled up in carefully structured ounds, challenging both traditional concepts of ceremonial deposits and ose of monuments.[90] This theme was matched on a larger scale by J. D.

ll's celebrated study of materials placed in pits and ditches on Iron Age ttlement sites in Wessex. He noted that what had been treated as refuse had en deposited with as much care and structuring as hoards, or grave goods. ttery, loose animal bones and small artefacts had been put into the earth as eticulously as the human bones and whole animal carcasses often found in e same places. He concluded that this was not part of a daily disposal of bbish, but of 'irregular rituals which engraved a cosmology into the ysical setting and daily lives of Iron Age people'.[91]

These patterns enable a relationship between hill forts and settlements to mapped out in Wessex, with further clues to the purposes of the former. Danebury the deposits must have been at least annual, while on the rmsteads excavated they were apparently made only every five to ten ars. The human bones found on settlements were mainly those of babies d children, while those at hill forts tend to be of adults, with an almost mplete monopoly on skulls and partial skeletons. The former seem erefore to have had rites celebrating the family and individual household; e latter to have focused on the wider community and the preoccupations of ature people.[92] Iron objects have been found especially often in the ysical boundaries of settlements, as if playing a significant role in their finition and perpetuation: perhaps they helped symbolically or magically defend them.[93] Such neat conclusions, however, still rest on a relatively all sample of evidence, and there have been cautions against any simple cognition of 'structured depositions' as resulting from ritual. It has been inted out that deposits of Late Bronze Age pottery are so complex and riable that they cannot be reduced to distinct categories, while human ne is very commonly found on settlement sites of the period as well as in ll forts and caves. At some in Bedfordshire, discarded debris, including the ts of human skeleton, was apparently moved around the settlements rather an given a single, ceremonial, deposition.[94] James Morris has emphasized at the burial of animals or portions of animals could still be the result of tchery, and the disposal of animals dead of disease or of meat gone putrid, much as that of ceremonial acts. He points out that butchers' refuse was ll deposited in an apparently deliberate and structured manner in the ristian Middle Ages, when pagan rites could no longer provide the

otive. To Morris, it remains true that ‘one archaeologist’s rubbish is
other’s ritual deposition’.[95]

The same diversity of interpretation hangs over another form of late
ehistoric ‘rubbish’: burnt mounds. These are found all over northern
rope, including most parts of the British Isles, and consist of heaps of
attered stones, in contexts mainly dating from the Late Bronze Age but
so from the Iron Age and, more rarely, as far back as the Neolithic. There
no doubt concerning how the stones were broken: they were first heated
d then either had water poured over them or were dropped into it. The
bate concerns why this happened. A functional explanation is that to drop
t rocks into water was the easiest way of bringing the latter near the boil,
cook food, when to put pots or cauldrons directly on to a fire would risk
mage to them. In this scenario, the mounds would represent the refuse
her from domestic meals or from special feasts on such occasions as
remonies to mark boundaries: and this idea was favoured in the 1980s.[96]
ey would also, however, take exactly the same form if they were created
ancient European equivalents to the Native American sweat lodges:
nber and canvas structures within which people underwent ritual
rification and trance experiences by sitting in steam released by sprinkling
ater over hot stones in a central hearth. On the other hand, there was no
cessary ritual component to the use of this technique to induce sweat: it
erated perfectly well as a means of getting clean in cold weather when
thing in the open was uncomfortable, and the modern sauna is an exact
uivalent. The sweat lodge or sauna explanation for burnt mounds,
opounded in the 1990s, seemed to have become dominant among experts
turn by the opening of the twenty-first century, because of the absence of
idence for actual feasting near the mounds.[97] Then, in 2009, it was
ported that one at the tip of the Lleyn Peninsula of north-west Wales was
sociated with a wooden trough and a water channel, which had been
eserved by unusually good local conditions. Grain remains were
scovered in the mound itself, and a residue of burnt stone and charred
aff and seeds in the trough. One obvious interpretation of all this evidence
as that the complex had been used for brewing, and a replica was tested
ith this activity and found to reproduce precisely the same remains.[98] For a
hile it looked as if the shattered stones were testimony not to prehistoric

irituality or hygiene but to the enduring northern European taste for beer. ıe whole matter was, however, opened out again by a survey published in)11, of evidence from the five thousand or so burnt mounds known to exist Ireland. This found that many were discovered with troughs – rock-cut, ɔoden or clay – like that in the Lleyn, so that the brewing hypothesis stood ɔ. However, a few sites had large quantities of cattle bone, and so feasting ımes back into the frame, while a few others had evidence of small timber ructures nearby which might have been sweat lodges.[99] It seems as if erybody was right after all, and the same features could be produced by fferent processes.

That may be a salutary verdict on the whole issue of careful depositions material in dry-land contexts during late prehistory, which occupy a ectrum from near-certain evidence for spiritually motivated activity at one d to the practical dumping of refuse at another: different kinds of rubbish, thered from different places on living sites and removed at different times, ɔuld give a very convincing appearance of structuring. Not even the most rdened cynic would term High Pasture Cave a straightforward rubbish ımp, and it is quite possible that it was the setting for ceremonies ncerned with encounters and symbolic oppositions between light and dark, e and death, water and earth, and animal and human, with that lyre being ayed to enhance an altered state of consciousness on the part of the ɔrshippers.[100] On the other hand, it is also possible that the cave system as a dumping ground of a kind, for objects and beasts (and eventually ople) who had become contaminated by bad associations and needed to be aced well out of the way of normal activity. When dealing with most of the her deposits, it is well to remember James Morris's caution about the anner in which experts still differ in their understanding of them: which eans that people in general are free to do so as well.

Human Remains

Pieces of human bone have regularly featured in the discussions above, common in the deposits from late prehistory found in water and land. ıere is nothing unusual or new in this pattern: after all, from the Neolithic ıwards, this sort of material appeared on both ceremonial and domestic es, and it has been found associated almost casually with camps and

ttlements in Europe since the Palaeolithic. What has frequently distracted tention from this fact, at least in the public eye, is its simultaneous esence, during most periods, in contexts that look to modern eyes more ke formal burial: from the cave at Paviland through the tomb-shrines of the rlier Neolithic and the round barrows of the later Neolithic and Early Iron ge, to the cremation urn cemeteries of the Middle Bronze Age. The fference in later British prehistory, and especially between the years 1000 d 600 BC, is that there is very little evidence of ceremonial burial, and of mbs or graves, and so the bodies or individual bones recovered from other aces become the more prominent.

A number of explanations have been advanced for this pattern. One is at human remains were disposed of in water, as whole bodies, cleaned nes or cremations. As said above, some of the artefacts laid in wet places this time may have been the equivalent of grave goods. There is a little rect evidence for this: as also said, pieces of human skeleton are metimes found with the water deposits, and in the Thames, at Eton, the ulls and bones of up to fifteen people, who died at some time between 00 and 200 BC, were found weighted down in the river. Some had been fleshed beforehand.[101] However, this may have been a punishment for nsgression rather than a normal rite, and hoards left in still water, where nes would be preserved, are rarely accompanied by human remains. emation, followed by the scattering of the burnt bones, is another possible planation for the apparent absence of burials. This rite certainly continued to the Late Bronze Age, when a few little circular ditches with cremated mains inside were dug in southern England. Small quantities of burnt man bone have been found in pits inside settlements from the period, rhaps token deposits from funeral pyres.[102]

In the 1990s and 2000s Joanna Brück made a special study of the esence of the dead on Late Bronze Age sites, and noted that not only mans but houses and artefacts were fragmented at the end of their active es in an apparently common process of transformation. The pattern, in her ading, calls into question the existence at the period both of the concept of ounded and indivisible human self and of formalized and static political d social hierarchies. As houses were abandoned, they were often given posits of human bone or tools, and freshly broken pottery or quern stones,

d then dismantled or burned down. Human remains were often put at undaries between different sorts of space, such as ditches, entrances, water d caves, as were objects, themselves often broken. They were placed in iddens of domestic refuse, which were in turn sometimes apparently read on fields as fertilizer, so continuing the cycle of death and rebirth. ey were also fashioned into objects that appear to have functioned as nulets, and in general a human being seems to have been regarded as an semblage of separable parts. Similarly, Brück noted that it was rare for the hole of a socketed axe to be deposited in the same hoard, suggesting that ch pieces of equipment were likewise dispersed at the end of their cycle of e, as part of the same process of regeneration.[103]

Such reflections remain relevant to the succeeding period, in which the onze Age gave way to the Iron, cremation apparently disappeared (though rnt remains may have been dispersed in air and water rather than buried), d unburnt human bone continued to feature in deposits on living sites and hill forts. Its presence has led to a widespread feeling among chaeologists that the predominant burial rite for most of the British Iron ge was excarnation, by which bodies were exposed until they disintegrated d disappeared under the impact of the forces of nature. The individual nes and partial skeletons found on many sites were supposed to have been usual examples of the retrieval of remains from this process and their nployment for particular purposes.[104] The excavation of partial or whole man bodies, or single bones, on Iron Age sites can be explained in a mber of different, often contrasting, ways. It is clear that the people presented could have been only a small proportion of the population – at ost 5 or 6 per cent – and so the key question is how they were selected. ey may have been especially honoured individuals, who were worshipped ter death as heroic or wise ancestors, and whose bones were venerated in e manner of the relics of Christian saints before being interred to nsecrate or protect a space. Alternatively, they may have been enemies, lled in battle or after capture, or criminals executed for heinous offences, hose corpses or body parts were displayed for a time at the settlement or rt concerned before being cast into a ditch or pit. The Greek traveller sidonius witnessed at first hand how the tribes of southern and central aul collected and treasured the severed heads of foes as trophies; but the

itish may have been different.[105] The pieces of body found in Iron Age ntexts in Britain may have been used in religious or magical rites, before ing replaced by others and discarded.[106] Where human and animal bones e found deposited in the same or similar places, having apparently been eated in the same or similar ways, differing interpretations are again ssible. The beasts concerned may have been especially precious to, or mbolically or spiritually associated with, the dead person or persons. They ay have been intended as food for the dead on their journey into the next e; or they may all have been sacrifices, offered up to deities or spirits. here is really no decisive means of distinguishing between these options.

Two regional case studies, taken from opposite ends of the island, may ustrate the problems and opportunities of the evidence. At a Late Bronze ge settlement at Cladh Hallan on the Outer Hebridean island of South Uist, eam led by Mike Parker Pearson dug up what seemed to be two human dies in the floors of roundhouses. They had apparently been laid there as dicatory deposits when the houses were constructed, and the people ncerned had lived locally but been dead for centuries before burial. They d been preserved during that time by soaking in a peat bog, the acidity of hich would kill the bacteria that normally decompose soft tissue: in effect, ey were mummies, the only examples known so far from a Bronze Age ciety in the Old World outside Egypt. Parker Pearson suggested that they d been retained and venerated as ancestors, and interred when the world of e living altered at the building of the settlement.[107] There are other more nister possibilities, such as that they were the remains of enemies kept as phies, object lessons or oracles, with stories attached to them, but these e probably less likely. They came to seem even more remarkable bsequently, when they were examined in detail and each was found to nsist of parts taken from three different people assembled to make an parent whole: the significance of these ‘jigsaw mummies’ remains clear.[108]

Iron Age settlements in northern Scotland often contain small amounts human skeleton, usually as individual bones, and especially skulls, placed der floors and in walls or in storage places, or on display. Some were erced to be hung up prominently. The people represented by these remains

uld have been admired forebears, victims of head-hunting or sacrifice, or dinary individuals whose parts were selected for use in rituals after death. ey could have been used to consecrate buildings, especially at their nstruction or abandonment. The flesh was usually left on the skulls, most which were those of women and children, which might argue against the ea of ancestor worship, as does the fact that animal remains were treated in uch the same way on the same sites. Evidence of violence is, however, re, the exception being a child with a chop mark to its spine, who was smembered and placed under a newly built roundhouse with butchered rts of animals. We do not know if the burial was the work of the killers or grieving relatives. Occasionally ancient bones were used: one in the undations of a wheel-shaped house on the island of Lewis, in the Outer ebrides, had been dug out of a nearby cemetery over a thousand years der. At Rennibister in Orkney skulls were defleshed and displayed, with parent pride or respect.[109] Caves were also used for such deposits: the osing burial at High Pasture is one case in point (and a rare one of bodies ing interred whole). At another northern Scottish site, Sculptor's Cave on e Moray Firth, the Late Bronze Age deposits included large numbers of man bones together with exceptionally rich metalwork. There was no sign domestic occupation, and it seems to have been a sacred place visited at tervals. Severed children's heads were displayed at the entrance, parently associated with some of the skeletons inside. Ian Armit, who has udied these remains from northern Scottish sites most consistently, has ggested that they might have been the result of human sacrifice or of the ocessing of the bodies of people who had died normally: a third possibility that they were enemy war dead, dedicated at the cave along with booty. In e second to fourth centuries AD, the cave was reused for ritual, more rsonal ornaments and accessories being deposited along with seven adless bodies, victims of sacrifice, execution or war.[110]

At the southern end of Britain, in the Wessex chalk hills and ighbouring areas of the West Country, a very similar pattern obtains: a atter of human bones and parts of bodies across settlement sites; and dividual bones, especially skulls, sections of skeleton, and some complete rials, placed in disused pits in hill forts. Some of the partial and whole dies were interred in groups, and the skulls were generally of men.

At Danebury the complete bodies were often weighed down by large ocks of flint and chalk, as if to deter them from rising again: indeed this, d the fact that whole human corpses are so rarely found, suggests that the rial of whole corpses was reserved for criminals and other outcasts from e social group.[111] Most of the human remains were apparently perceived d treated in similar ways to those of animals, objects and materials, being mmonly dismembered, modified and interred in a deliberate and uctured manner. There were, however, some limits to the similarities, as e animal bones show signs of having first been exposed in the open air, hile the human were not, presumably having been buried for a time forehand or protected by shelters or suspended in shrouds. At seven places the southern English chalk country pieces of skull have been found which ere fashioned into amulets or pendants for use by the living. The choice of ople to go into pits and ditches on Wessex sites was highly selective – at anebury, bones from about three hundred people have been identified to te, laid there over 450 years, out of a total occupying population which ould probably have been around three hundred strong at any one oment.[112]

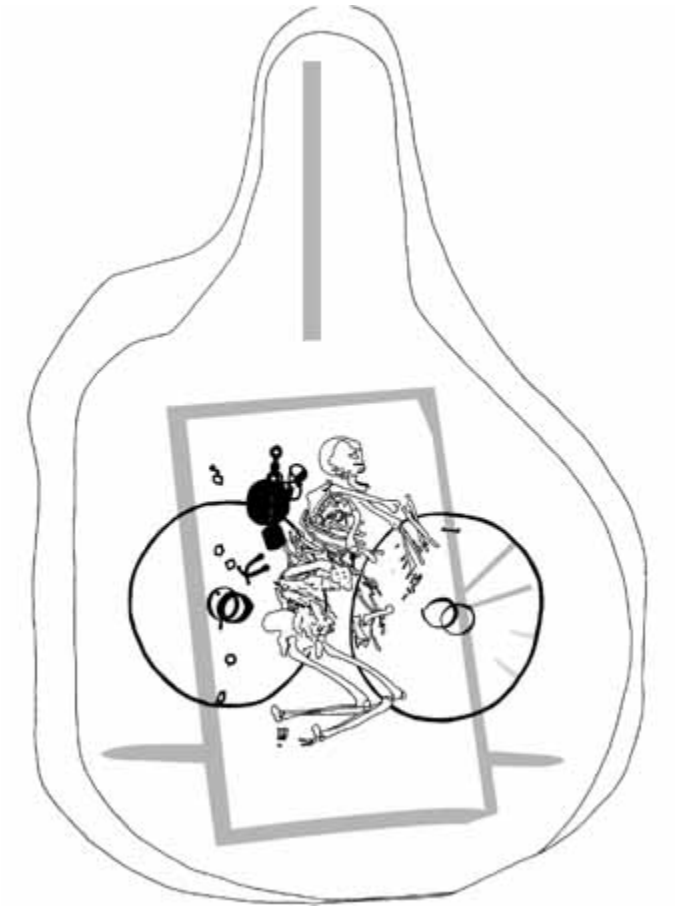
The picture is therefore fairly consistent across Britain, and admits of the me very broad spectrum of interpretation, with one end resting on an sumption that the individuals whose bones were left on Iron Age sites ere sacrifices, criminals, transgressors or enemies, or simply had their mains arbitrarily selected for magical or religious rites, and the other on e view that they were beloved friends and relatives, admired leaders or rebears, or the mourned victims of tragic ends. Even those corpses eighted down at Danebury were not necessarily treated in this way because ey were hated in life: they may have been acceptable enough persons who rished in especially disturbing and unfortunate ways, which created a fear at they would be restless after death. A mixture of all these contexts may ve obtained at the same site. All that can be said with confidence is that r much of the Iron Age, the people who left physical remains must have en remarkable in some fashion.

Once again, however, archaeology may prove capable of altering parently well founded conclusions with just a few new excavations. In 91 and 1996 an enclosed settlement, dating from *c.* 700 to *c.* 300 BC, was

vestigated at Suddern Farm, near Danebury. It showed the classic pattern deposits in pits: some seventy-eight of the latter were found, of which 44 r cent contained animal bones or pottery. All the domestic species of the ne were represented, plus a few pieces of red deer and fox, and 126 bird nes, of which over half were of ravens. There were also two partial human eletons and some isolated bones. So far, so normal, but Sir Barry Cunliffe d his colleagues also found a cemetery on the edge of the site which, trapolating from the sample excavated, could have contained 300 adults, children and 180 babies, buried between about 500 and 300 BC: a presentative population.[113] In the same decade a similar cemetery was earthed connected to a settlement at Yarnton, near Oxford, and a small one s also been found to the west of that in the Cotswold Hills at Kemble.[114] l were of crouched complete bodies, flexed so tightly that they were obably tied. It has begun to seem possible that, by (naturally enough) iling to excavate the edges or environs of settlements as well as the core es, archaeologists have so far missed the major burial rite of the Early to iddle Iron Age. If this is the case, then the bones or bodies found in ttlements or forts would be people either denied interment in the usual meteries, or dug up later so that the skeletons, or pieces of them, could be ought back into places of regular activity by the living, for some symbolic ceremonial purpose. They still look special, but the context of their eatment may have altered.

Certainly from the Middle Iron Age onwards, normative burial sites gan to reappear very obviously in a few regions of Britain, taking highly stinctive local forms which multiplied in the later part of the period. The rliest and most spectacular – starting in the third century BC – were on the alk hills of eastern Yorkshire, where cemeteries of mounds inside ctangular ditches appeared, covering individual crouched burials. They ere huge, numbering up to 500 graves in each, and organized in a clear erarchy. Most of those buried had no goods, some had pottery, ornaments d joints of pork, and a few were given swords and knives. Nineteen of ese were buried with carts, which might have functioned as chariots, and o in this number were female, with ornaments and a mirror instead of eapons: in addition isolated cart-burials of this kind have been found at rrybridge in the Aire Valley of West Yorkshire and much further off at

ewbridge, near Edinburgh. The people singled out for this elaborate kind rite might have been royalty, aristocrats or religious leaders, and it seems have been practised for a relatively short period around 200 BC. Different yles of burial were adopted in different cemeteries in East Yorkshire: in me the bodies were extended, in others flexed, and in yet others crouched the form of a foetus, though this was probably also the normal sleeping sition of the time. Yet, there were different traditions concerning which ods were favoured for the dead, and whether meat was put with them. ost of the corpses were laid out on a line north to south, but those with eapons had a special, east to west, alignment. Likewise, the animal part id beside most bodies was the left foreleg of a sheep, but some had that of pig. These burials were laid according to the predominant custom of tting their faces to the east; but a minority faced west, and in that case the g of the pig was taken from the right side of the animal. Similarly, in the rt (or chariot) graves the only animal parts found are from the front of a g, joints cut from the left side being put to the north of the body and those om the right side of the beast being put to the south. As Mike Parker earson has noted, encoded in this pattern is a cosmology of associated rections and cardinal points. These cemeteries flourished on the Yorkshire alk for about one and a half centuries, and then died out.[115]



57 A plan of the female cart or chariot burial in the cemetery at Wetwang Slack, East Yorkshire, er that provided by Dent from the excavation. Visible around the body are the wheels of the vehicle, iron mirror, a bronze box and other goods, marking the body out as that of a high-status individual.

In the third century BC, the people of what are now Devon and Cornwall gan to produce cemeteries of stone coffins, with mostly crouched burials d few goods: the largest yet found, at Harlyn Bay, Cornwall, had 130 dies. From the last century BC, fields of cremation urns were created in ent and Sussex, and in Kent people were also laid extended under square rrows similar to those which had been made in Yorkshire. The largest Iron ge cremation cemetery yet discovered in England is at Westhampnett near ichester, which had at least 161 burials, cremated on pyres near the aves. Only a minority of the burnt bones were in urns, though the rest may ve been buried in bags, some of which could have been highly decorated some of the urns were: this is another example of the manner in which the rvival rate of different materials may skew the archaeological record. Few aves contained all the human remains from the pyre, many had less than 5

r cent of them, and some had none, showing that the older custom of terring parts of the human body persisted in a new guise, and that the very rm ‘grave’ may be inappropriate here: ‘memorial’ or ‘cenotaph’ might be tter. Likewise, though almost all the deposits included goods, they were ver weapons and rarely ornaments or tools; most consisted of pottery and imal bones, so were perhaps food offerings. The same rites were used for l people, as if a community based on dispersed farms was being brought gether in death. In the same period mass cemeteries without coffins peared in Dorset, of people laid crouched on their right side with heads wards the east, often with pots and joints of meat and some with jewellery d weapons. Some men, however, were interred on their backs, with heads the south-east: so even now, as in the earlier hill forts, a distinction was ade between different kinds of dead. Across most of southern England, emation burials were now dug, with or without urns, or single complete rials with weapons put alongside the men and rich goods – mirrors, onze bowls and beads – with the women. At Basingstoke in the Hampshire wlands, a young woman was interred in a pit with two sheep, two horses, ints of beef, four weaving combs, two rings, and an older woman, whose ad rested on the pelvis of the younger. Perhaps she was a devoted servant ho had died naturally at the same time, or who had chosen, or been mpelled, to accompany her mistress into death.[116]

Each of the distinctive regional customs corresponded to a territory cupied by a particular tribe at the time of the Roman conquest: eastern orkshire by the Parisi, the south-western peninsula by the Dumnoni, and orset by the Durotriges. Similarly, the most spectacular of the Late Iron ge burials were found in the Hertfordshire and Essex heartland of the chest and most powerful of the kingdoms which had formed in Britain fore the Romans arrived: the joint one of the Catuvellauni and inovantes. There members of the elite were put into deep burial pits with ported wine jars, drinking vessels, foodstuffs and firedogs for spit-asting. At Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire, close to one of the main yal residences, a young man had been cremated in a bearskin and laid in a t with five wine jars, Italian bronze and silver drinking bowls and glass ming pieces. It seems that he was expected to do some entertaining in the xt life, unless the objects were so polluted by his person that nobody else

ıred use them, or were gifts made by mourners to show their generosity. At ıother royal centre, which became Colchester, dead aristocrats were ıparently laid in state in wooden chambers during the early first century ɔ. They were then burned on pyres close by, with various goods, and the hes were put back into the chambers, with smashed dinner services – rhaps from the funeral feasts – before the structures were themselves ırned.[117] Such elaborate burials spread southwards, as a fashion among the ite, into the south-eastern corner of England, so that the last graves at the esthampnett cremation ceremony in Sussex were of this kind.

The new fashions in burial were accompanied by a proliferation in uthern Britain of distinctive new regional styles of pottery: indeed, the two gely, though not entirely, matched each other.[118] Clearly, important marks local group identity were being set up by them. All of the new treatments human remains seem to have arrived from the Continent. Indeed, the ɔrkshire square-barrow cemeteries are so similar to those found around rras in northern France that it was formerly thought that they must have en made by invaders from that region. The differences in detail in the ture of the burials have now substituted the idea that the custom was ıported and combined with native traditions. These imported traditions of ɔw to treat the dead either fed upon or themselves helped to inspire a new stem of social inequality among the southern British, with a clearly fferent rite accorded to superior individuals: the development of the esthampnett cemetery, from the standard and universal system of emation burial to the appearance of large chambers containing individuals ith rich goods, is a striking illustration of this change in one community. To ate this is not to suggest perfect equality in the earlier Iron Age – the lection of certain people for whole or partial burial in pits rules this out, d Niall Sharples's portrait of a fractured Wessex culture deeply suspicious strangers and transgressors should not be forgotten – but there is patent idence for the emergence of aristocracies in the south by the start of what reckoned to be the Christian or Common Era. In this sense, the southern itish were Romanizing before the Romans arrived, and the point is made en more obvious by the contrast with their northern neighbours, for in otland, beyond the limit of Roman rule, the old treatment of human mains continued for over half a millennium more.[119] What is completely

ıknown is how far these changes in social structure and burial rite reflected ːering beliefs with regard to the nature of the afterlife and the fate of the ul. The only general comment that can be securely made about these ːvelopments is that by the end of the prehistoric period in southern Britain, rmal burial was once more becoming the norm, but according to a sharply stinctive range of regional traditions.

The Problem of Human Sacrifice

Repeatedly, in this chapter the possibility has been acknowledged that ıman remains recovered from various Iron Age contexts had been the ctims of sacrifice. The latter term originally just meant ‘consecration’ in e sense of being dedicated to a religious purpose, and has been narrowed its modern sense of being put to death as part of such a purpose.[120] Such a e has been recorded in relatively recent times, and by reliable observers, in ɔrth and South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania, and in various forms: lling a person or people so that they can accompany a powerful individual to the next world; or to give strength to the foundations of a building; or as ːneans of predicting the future; or, most commonly, in the belief that the tion gives pleasure to the deities worshipped by the community concerned. ɛspite this wide distribution across the globe, most human beings in corded time have shunned all forms of human sacrifice. For present ırposes it matters greatly that the ancient cultures that have been most fluential in forming the world view of the Western world – the Hebrews, ːeeks and Romans – abhorred such practices and regarded them as a llmark of barbarism and bad religion.

Here lies something of a problem, for the ritual killing of human beings s often taken other forms, which are easily confused with sacrifice. One is e execution of individuals convicted of serious crimes, which has been a ıstom of most societies and has generally been invested with a large easure of ceremony and often with religious trappings, right up to to the esence of a clergyman to afford prayers or rites for the condemned in the ɔdern West. Likewise very many communities have put prisoners of war, pecially captured enemy warriors, to death, and have done so with a strong ɛment of ritual. This includes cultures that formally denounced human crifice as an unacceptable component of religion. The greatest of Greek

ets, Homer, admiringly portrayed his mightiest hero, Achilles, as killing elve captive noblemen to decorate the funeral pyre of his friend Patroclus. deed, his warriors operated in a world in which the adult male population a captured town was routinely slaughtered. The Old Testament provingly records several episodes of similar treatment of tribes defeated the Israelites. The Romans used arenas for the destruction of both iminals and war prisoners, in highly theatrical displays, and in 97 BC put a t of foreign captives to death in order to avert danger, following the advice a soothsayer. The only reason why they, and the Greeks of the classical riod, had discontinued the earlier wholesale murder of males in a nquered population was that they had developed an economy based on ass slavery. To outsiders, the three forms of ritualized killing – execution, aughter of prisoners, and sacrifice – could look extremely similar, and chaeologically they can appear identical.

In this context, it is crucially important that a number of ancient Greek d Roman texts – by Julius Caesar, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pomponius ela, Suetonius, Pliny and Lucan – accused the tribes of Gaul of killing man beings as an integral part of their religion, closely associating this ith the Druids. Another Roman writer, Tacitus, made the same charge gainst the native British, specifically on the island of Anglesey, and a later e, Dio Cassius, described it as a component of Boudicca's Rebellion in uth-eastern Britain. Most of these authors used it as a means of justifying e Roman conquest of the peoples concerned, and only one of them, Caesar, d first-hand experience of the tribal cultures which he described. Three, aesar, Diodorus and Strabo, discuss the motivation behind the custom, in l cases in Gaulish society. Caesar said that it was employed only in times mortal danger, when it was believed that by offering up the life of other man beings, the people making the offering would themselves be spared. e added that condemned criminals were the victims, but that innocent dividuals were used if no malefactors were available. Diodorus and Strabo, th living far from Gaul and after the Roman conquest, said that people ere killed as offerings to deities at the beginning of harvest, but the former id that prisoners of war were chosen for the purpose, and the latter ecified that criminals were. It may readily be seen how much the three odels of ritual killing outlined above overlap in these texts, and how only a

tle misunderstanding or misrepresentation may produce a major shift of rception in them.[121] Two recent essays are of relevance here in nstructing a framework of interpretation. One is by J. Rives, who notes at Greeks and Romans deployed the charge of human sacrifice against reigners in order to confirm their own sense of cultural superiority. oreover, pagan Romans also levelled the same charge against groups thin their own state whom they regarded as suspect, including Jews and ristians.[122] Modern scholars have tended automatically to disbelieve it in e latter context, while being much more ready to accept it in the case of reign peoples, who have left no records of their own. A similar pattern is und in the second essay, by Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, who has studied how ristian Romans, in turn, employed the same accusation to attack Jews and retical sects within their own faith. He has emphasized that historians have ually rejected it when used against Jews and members of mainstream ristian denominations, and believed it in the case of heresies which have ft no writings of their own and no modern descendants.[123] Such insights ay caution scholars against too ready and literal an acceptance of the cusations against the ancient Gauls and British.

For much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it seems at medieval Irish literature weighed in on the side of belief in the custom the Iron Age British Isles, for a few texts, notably the prose and metrical *indeshenchas*, testify to the existence of human sacrifice in pagan Ireland. ecently, however, Jacqueline Borsje has made a thorough study of these orks and concluded that they reflect a new interest in the subject by Irish holars in the period around 1100, inspired by accounts of it in the Bible d ancient Roman texts and having no demonstrable link to any ancient sh reality.[124] In view of all this, it is hardly surprising that, over the past ve hundred years, writers on ancient Britain in general, and the Druids in rticular, have accepted or rejected the belief that they offered humans as crifices, with varying degrees of fervour, according to their own spositions and polemical purposes.[125] During the twentieth century, a table chasm opened up within the discipline of archaeology itself, ncerning the treatment of the issue in different periods. As discussed rlier, Victorian scholars frequently interpreted Neolithic burials as idence of human sacrifice, but their professional successors largely

andoned this tradition for more benign interpretations of the same idence. This is despite the fact that the evidence concerned shares several atures with that found on Iron Age sites: the presence of human bone in remonial contexts; the mixing or close proximity of human and animal mains, with some similarities of treatment; the fact that only a small rcentage of the likely population can be represented by the surviving eletal material; and the frequent deposition of only parts of bodies or even ngle bones. By contrast, while the majority of experts on the British Iron ge have tended to ignore the question of human sacrifice since the 1990s, me of the most prominent have continued to argue for its existence in the riod.[126] The difference seems explicable only in terms of the survival of xts, for the later Iron Age, by the Greek, Roman and Irish authors who emed to record the practice in Iron Age Britain: it is a specific literary adition.

In 1984 that tradition appeared to have found a clinching piece of idence in its favour, with the discovery of the 'bog body' known as ndow Man. It consisted of the head, neck, arms and upper torso of a man nd, in a later discovery, part of his leg), dug out of a peat bog called ndow Moss, Cheshire. This was arguably the most sensational find made British archaeology in the decade, and the man's remains became one of e most carefully investigated human bodies of all time.[127] The key ember of the investigating team was Iain West, a leading criminal thologist from Guy's Hospital, London, who concluded that the man had ffered a triple execution, his skull being broken by two blows, his throat t, and his neck broken by a cord still fastened around it, which had been isted tight like a garrotte. This strongly suggested a ritual killing, an terpretation reinforced by two other factors. The first was contributed by nne Ross, the leading expert on Iron Age religion in Britain during the 60s and 1970s, who pointed out that triple deaths were recorded in edieval Celtic literature, where they could represent a memory of just such sacrificial practice in pagan times. The second consisted of four grains of istletoe pollen found in the stomach contents of the body. The Roman iter Pliny had asserted that mistletoe was held sacred by the Druids when was found growing on an oak tree, and its presence in the man suggested at he might have been given a drink containing it as part of his

nsecration as a sacrifice.[128] The cumulative evidence thus assembled peared to justify the action of the British Museum in putting the body on splay, as one of its best-known exhibits, with a label declaring that the idence 'strongly suggests' that it had been subjected to 'ritual sacrifice'. s such, it rapidly took its place in works on the British and European Iron ge, as the near-solid proof that had been needed that the ancient authors ho had accused the British and their neighbours of engaging in this actice had been telling the truth.[129] It also found its way into popular lture as a cathartic force for religious intolerance: fundamentalist ristians and irresponsible journalists alike used it as a means to denounce cient Druids, and then turn on their modern counterparts for attempting to vive a religion tainted by atrocity.[130]

Behind such an interpretation lay a text a great deal more recent and rectly influential than anything written by a Greek or Roman: the best-lling English translation, published in 1969, of a Danish book by Peter V. lob, which had revealed to a large public the importance of human bodies eserved in peat bogs as source material for prehistoric cultures.[131] Glob ew attention to the large number of such finds made by that time, in enmark, Germany and the Netherlands, dating from late prehistory. Some d suffered violent deaths and seemed to have been ritually deposited. He ggested that these had been human sacrifices, linked specifically to the lt of a fertility goddess to whom they had been ceremonially wed before ing sent to join her. This idea was speculation based ultimately on one stom which one Roman author, Tacitus, had recorded (on unknown thority) as being practised by one (remote) group of German tribes, and r which there is no solid evidence.[132] There may have been no common ason for the presence of these corpses in northern European bogs. Some ay have been murder victims, and those killed with signs of ritual may all ve been criminals, found guilty of heinous crimes which were deemed to erit special punishment and exclusion from the human world in death.[133] total of 184 sets of human remains had been recovered from British etlands before Lindow Man, but few had been securely dated, and none d been susceptible to a full measure of modern scientific analysis.[134] The ndow body was not only substantial and well preserved, fitted for such eatment, but may have been the first bog body ever discovered with its

ratigraphic context intact. As almost all the British peat levels old enough preserve such finds had then been dug out, he also represented one of the st chances to carry out any such work. Unsurprisingly, his discovery was iled as a British example of the tradition highlighted by Glob, and terpreted according to Glob's ideas.[135]

On closer inspection there are serious problems with the interpretation. ne greatest was that before Iain West saw the body, it was inspected by other expert, an anatomist from Liverpool University and coroner's thologist called Robert Connolly, who was then recruited to the vestigating team. He and West agreed that the man had been in his enties and completely unused to hard manual work, suggesting high social atus. He had been put into the bog naked except for a fox-fur armband ound one arm, and his skull had been fractured by heavy blows. Connolly, wever, thought that the cord around the throat was a necklace, from which e pendant had been removed by the man's killers or had corroded away.[136] e pointed out that the cartilage and muscle showed none of the usual auma of strangulation, and that the tightness of the cord had been caused the swelling of neck tissues in the peat. He likewise believed that the ep cut on the throat had been caused after death, perhaps by peat-cutters, d the broken neck by another of the blows that had smashed the skull; a oken rib might have been caused by a further blow, and there also seemed be a stab wound in the chest. That turned a highly ritualized killing into a ore mundane one.[137]

Anne Ross's parallel cases of triple deaths in medieval literature were so less helpful than had at first appeared. Leaving aside the bigger question whether that literature contains any accurate information about ancient itish or Irish paganism, which will be considered later, the deaths in the edieval texts were never sacrifices: instead, the people who suffered them ere accidentally killed three times over and so fulfilled apparently mpossible predictions that they would die in each of those ways. The stories ncerned were intended to illustrate the power of prophecy, or of stiny.[138] As for the mistletoe in the man's stomach, even accepting that iny's assertion had any basis in truth, no remains of the plant itself were und with the four pollen grains, and four grains is too a small quantity to

ake ingestion in a drink probable. They could have got into the man's stem accidentally, by blowing on to his last meal.[139] In 1987 parts of a cond ancient male body were found in the same bog, which contained ood evidence of that man's last meal, and it had not included mistletoe. oth scientists who made this analysis put on record their disbelief that there d been any ritual significance to the final food eaten by either person.[140] A fferent problem concerns dating, which in the case of the Lindow bodies is ade problematic by contamination by peat, so that the radiocarbon results tained may too easily reflect the time at which the peat developed, rather an that at which the human remains were put into it. After three successive empts to reach a reliable date, by two different laboratories, the British useum accepted the last, which gave a cluster of dates between the early st century AD and the early part of the second, but with a 30 per cent ance that the body was up to a few hundred years more recent. The useum disregarded that chance, and declared officially that the man had ed in the mid first century, which represented the medium point on the uster of dates and was still before the Roman invasion of the region.[141] owever, a human head had already been found in Lindow Moss in 1983 d dated firmly to the Roman or post-Roman period, and the second body und there, in 1987, achieved the same result.[142] In 1958 a severed head, hich had also been tied about the neck by a cord and had a fractured skull, d been found in another bog near Manchester, Worsley Moss: its diocarbon likewise made it Romano-British.[143] When the dates from the fferent body parts are all put together, they cluster in Roman Britain, when man sacrifice was formally illegal. Some scholars have sought to concile this with the sacrificial theory by suggesting that the nefarious actices of the preceding Iron Age had continued in secret.[144] This is a nable hypothesis, the evidence for which will be considered in the next apter, but a circular one, because of the lack of solid proof that such actices had ever existed: Lindow Man was supposed to *be* that proof.

It may therefore be proposed that the identification of the body as the ctim of a highly ritualized killing, let alone of human sacrifice, is still ssible, but insecure. There is no doubt that Iain West was an excellent thologist, but he had never before examined a body which had lain in peat r almost two thousand years. No modern British court of law would accept

e conclusions of a single medical expert, when another had challenged em right at the beginning, and there was a chain of cases during the late ventieth century which revealed the dangers of relying on one such expert hen unchallenged. What has been especially interesting, in the context of odern cultural history, has been the manner in which the original, gemonic, propagation of the interpretation of Lindow Man as the victim of itual death has broken down. During the first ten years after the blication of the British Museum's report, a few experts in prehistoric ligion who did not specialize in the Iron Age commented briefly on the ssibility that its conclusion – in favour of the sacrificial hypothesis – was secure.[145] They were ignored, as was a BBC television programme in 98, in the *Horizon* series on current scientific developments, which drew tention to problems in the pathological and the dating evidence: a very rare se of an attack by television journalists on an archaeological orthodoxy.[146] the mid 2000s controversy broke out at last, in the pages of the *Times terary Supplement* and *The Times*, which provoked first a restatement of e official line from the British Museum and then a possible knowledgement that it might have flaws; but nothing was done to alter the pelling of the exhibit.[147]

The turning point came when the body was loaned to the Manchester useum for a temporary exhibition in 2008. It had been there before, when e interpretation of ritual killing had been stated as orthodoxy, but this time e staff at Manchester mounted a display which highlighted the many fferent ways in which the significance of the body could be viewed.[148] The hibition was accompanied by a conference, at which virtually all speakers gued for a similar openness of vision, including Jody Joy, who was the okesperson for the British Museum and had just taken charge of the llery in which Lindow Man usually resided.[149] Subsequently he published ooklet with the museum's press, intended for visitors, which candidly knowledged the difficulties in interpreting the body, and entered an open rdict.[150] When the corpse was returned to the museum from Manchester, it as given a new label which took the same line. In 2010 the second edition Timothy Darvill's classic textbook on prehistoric Britain stringently uestioned the original interpretation of the find.[151] A similarly wide survey blished by an equally prominent expert in the Neolithic, Richard Bradley,

d already declared the sacrificial explanation for bog bodies unlikely.[152] he new tendency towards pluralism has, however, not completely ertaken the old hegemonic emphasis on sacrifice, for the latter was stated in 2010 by some of the most eminent experts in Iron Age ritual actices, in books intended for a popular market and without recognizing y challenges to the old orthodoxy.[153]

In other nations, the application of the sacrificial interpretation has ntinued to be applied to newly found bog bodies as if no others were ssible or necessary, most obviously in Ireland, where remains of two more en were dug out of peat at Oldcroghan in County Offaly and Clonycavan County Meath during the year 2003. They bring the total of bodies covered from Irish wetlands to 130, dating from the Neolithic to the iddle Ages, but clustering, like those from elsewhere in northern Europe, late prehistory. Both had been young, muscular and of high status, and d been savagely battered and mutilated as part of the process of being lled and consigned to the bogs, perhaps around 300 BC. Their presence ose to what have been identified as the boundaries of early medieval Irish ngdoms was used to strengthen the assertion that they had been victims of gan religious rites, ignoring the fact that such frontiers were also propriate as execution sites for criminals or political enemies, or points at hich to despatch captured enemy warriors. This single reading of the idence was conveyed not only in print but on television and in a rmanent exhibition of those and other bog bodies at the National Museum Dublin, entitled ‘Kingship and Sacrifice’.[154] In Britain, however, we seem be reaching a situation, at least for the present, in which a multiplicity of adings of the evidence can be made officially as well as in practice. In ese, Lindow Man may have been a human sacrifice, willing or not, a ember of or a stranger to the people who put him into the Moss, a victim violent crime or an individual himself condemned and executed, justly or t, for a serious crime. He may have been Iron Age or Romano-British, or en, by a long stretch of the possible dates, post-Roman. He may have been id in the bog with the other people found there, and for the same reasons, at a very different time and as a result of very different motives. He can used to exemplify the triumphs or failures, the prowess or the limitations, modern archaeology.

As such, he stands for the nature of the evidence for human sacrifice in on Age Britain as a whole. It should be obvious from what is argued above at to suggest that there is none would be very wrong: there is plenty, both xtual and material. The problem is that all of it can be interpreted in a fferent way, negating its status as proof. The progress of knowledge in this ea can perhaps best be characterized not as producing a ‘better Iron Age’, a ‘new Iron Age’, but as generating a series of different possible Iron ges, existing in parallel. This is, of course, a larger theme of this book as approach to the study of prehistory, but whether readers will find it ractive or not will depend upon their natures and habits of thought.[155]

Sacred Places

It used to be a truism of Iron Age studies that Britain lacked ritual onuments from the period, in sharp contrast with those of the Neolithic d Early Bronze Age but in conformity with the Late Bronze Age. Only in e last centuries of the period, ran the argument, did detectable ritual uctures reappear, in the southern part of the island and probably under the me Continental influences which encouraged the return of burials to the me region. Even then, they were not very impressive, in number or size. y 2009, eighteen had been identified, at fifteen sites. Their form made other break with the earlier prehistoric past, because they were rarely rcular, 70 per cent being rectangular or square and the rest a variety of apes. They were, moreover, rather flimsy timber buildings, most of which uld only have accommodated a dozen people and a quarter of which were rge enough for just one worshipper, though a few could have taken up to ty. Almost all were isolated from other buildings, and almost half had an closure to set them further apart. Virtually all had doors facing between rth-east and south-east, towards the sunrise (but not quite all). Over half ere inside settlements or hill forts, but the rest stood in open countryside d needed a special journey. Eight have produced deposits of objects when cavated: brooches at seven, coins at seven, animal bones at four, and real miniature weapons at two.

58 Reconstruction of the Iron Age shrine identified at Heathrow, Middlesex, under the site of the ·sent airport, as imagined in the mid twentieth century by Alan Sorrell and reproduced here with the ·mission of the Museum of London. It was larger than most. The sacrifice of a bull is being ›resented here, with a presiding pair of figures who may be intended as Druids.

The most elaborate interments of objects known to date were probably at allaton on a Leicestershire hilltop, where the shrine was set within a ditch, d probably a palisade, with a processional way running east to west. The cal tribe, the Corieltavi, buried a total of 5,294 coins there, in fourteen ›ards, just before the Roman invasion of their territory. Some 6,901 pieces animal bone were also found, almost all from pigs which had not been ıtchered before burial and so look like genuine sacrificial offerings. There as a strong tendency at Hallaton to give special significance to the right- nd side: the right forelegs had been removed from most of the pigs, rhaps to be consumed by special people, and most of the coins were on the ght-hand side of a ditch in the entrance which funnelled worshippers round the right. It is very likely that offerings of food, drink or cloth were made most of these sites, but these leave no trace in the archaeological record. ıere is no clear indication of the nature of the deities venerated though the esence of weaponry at two sites might argue that they were sacred to a arrior cult. Distinguishing these so-called shrines from other features presented now only by post holes is difficult without the presence of

parent offerings (and such deposits were of course common in forts and ttlements in general). Their main qualification for the label is often simply at they seem to have had no other discernible purpose.[156]

The apparent absence of impressive ritual monuments in Britain during e period seemed more surprising in view of the increasing evidence for em in surrounding lands. In Ireland, huge ceremonial enclosures were ected in the last millennium BC. Some, such as at Tara in Leinster and athcroghan in Connacht, occurred in clusters and were rectangular, round oval and made of low walls or banks. Others, such as at Navan Fort in lster and Dún Ailinne in Leinster, consisted of rings of massive timber sts, which in the latter case were almost certainly free-standing and in the rmer may have supported a wooden building, surrounded in turn by a bank ith an internal ditch. These constructions would have been as imposing as ything erected earlier in Irish prehistory and were sometimes set in ndscapes with prominent Neolithic monuments, as if to maintain a liberate continuity with a remembered or legendary past; the placing of e ditch inside the bank at Navan and some of the Rathcroghan enclosures ay have imitated henges.[157] In northern France, large rectangular closures of wood and mud brick were constructed around 300 BC; the most lebrated are at Gournay-sur-Aronde and Ribemont-sur-Ancre. Within em were quantities of animal bones – cattle, pigs, sheep and wild game – d Gournay had about two thousand iron weapons and pieces of armour ng from poles inside the precinct or from the gateway. More weapons ere piled around the outer wall of Ribemont, with eighty headless eletons, and the bodies of nearly a thousand young men had been burned side the inner precinct. They seem to have been associated with war, but hich of the human bodies represented enemy dead found on the battlefield, prisoners who were later killed for entertainment or sacrificed, and which presented the honoured war casualties of the community, is anybody's ess.[158] Again, nothing like these precincts has been found in Britain.

The perceived barrenness of the British Iron Age of impressive remonial monuments has largely evaporated in recent years with the alization that hill forts were enclosures within which people gathered, ten episodically and seasonally, for a range of purposes, of which ritual

as one. Some, as has been said, seem suited only for occupation for ecific ceremonies. If they are admitted to the ledger of consecrated uctures from the period then it becomes crowded with sacred sites as pressive as anything before. Furthermore, the existence of substantial nber alignments and avenues is increasingly being recognized, in that rlier time around the junction of the Bronze and Iron Ages in which hill rts were not yet common. That at Flag Fen has already been described, and t far away, at Barleycroft Farm in the Great Ouse Valley of ambridgeshire, over a thousand posts were set up during the Late Bronze ge in a series of rows, often with T-shaped terminals. They were erected id farmland but could have served no practical purpose, and required a eat communal effort: the obvious conclusion is that they formed a vast ual landscape.[159] Similar long and mysterious lines of posts were found ound a settlement of about 1000 BC near Upper Bucklebury above the ennet Valley in Berkshire. This was not just any community, but one sociated with the earliest evidence yet found for iron-working in Britain, d the alignments may have marked it out as special.[160] That similar aditions persisted into the Iron Age seems indicated by the now celebrated e of Fiskerton, on the River Witham east of Lincoln, where a timber useway ran down to the water. It was composed of 195 vertical posts with ushwood and plants laid between, which were originally erected in the rly part of 457 BC (dated by the tree rings) and repaired at intervals for one d a half centuries. Around and beneath the causeway was a classic ritual etland deposit, of swords, spearheads, axe heads, metal-working tools, files d saw, with three fragments of human bone (one from the skull of a young ult, with an unhealed sword slash in it) and some from both domestic and ld animals. The structure could have served a practical purpose as a nding stage, but the length was in excess of that needed for one, and the posits were commenced after the causeway was finished. Great interest s been generated by the discovery that forty-four of the timbers were lled in episodes spaced nineteen years apart, six of which coincided with tal eclipses of the moon. This suggests that the posts were being replaced special times, but it is as yet no more than an exciting suggestion, needing be tested at other sites. As things stand, Fiskerton is the pre-eminent erside site with ritual deposits yet to be dated to the British Iron Age.[161]

It may be observed that one problem in detecting sacred places in that
ge is the manner in which ceremonial and practical uses of constructions
em often to overlap. This has been discussed with relation to hill forts, and
Fiskerton, and it becomes acute, and controversial, when discussing the
uctures to which archaeologists have given the French name ‘souterrain’.
ney consist of underground chambers with passages leading into them and
ith an entrance or entrances significantly smaller than the space inside.
ney are found over much of Ireland, northern and western Scotland and its
lands, western Cornwall and Brittany, usually in settlements and forts. In
is sense they look like a feature of ‘Atlantic’ Britain, France and Ireland,
ut they are missing from Wales and Galloway, a pattern which has never
en explained. In Ireland, where they are one of the commonest kinds of
chaeological monument – over three thousand are known, all across the
untry – there has been little doubt about their purpose. The early medieval
xts there spell it out: they were temporary refuges for people and their
ost portable possessions if raiders attacked and were too numerous to be
pelled in a straight fight. They were ideal for the purpose, as enemy
arriors would be obliged to enter their chambers one by one, exposing
ead and arms as they did so. Concealed air vents made it difficult to smoke
ut the occupants, who would have to be starved or dug out, and both
perations were too lengthy for the classic hit-and-run tactics of a raid, to
hich the same early literature also testifies. Archaeology has supported this
terpretation, as the elongated chambers seem to have an odd shape for
orage places and have no layer of dust from regular opening and no trace
storage containers. Finds within them have been few and, as the texts
ggest, of relatively small and valuable items, such as coins, a beaker, a bell
a brooch.[162]

Some authors, reasonably enough, have projected the Irish use of these
uctures on to their whole range.[163] There is, however, a problem of dating,
cause the Irish examples all seem to date from between AD 500 and 1200,
hile those elsewhere mainly belong to the pre-Roman Iron Age: in Brittany
ey were built between 600 and 100 BC, and in Cornwall between the fourth
ntury BC and the second century AD, and in Scotland between the first and
ird centuries AD.[164] Despite the basic similarity of form, they may
erefore have had different purposes, and they also have different scholarly

ıditions of interpretation. The Scottish structures are locally known as arth houses', and they vary in form between different regions: those ound the Tay basin and Firth of Tay are larger, tend to curve and metimes have side chambers, while those in northern Scotland and Orkney e smaller and simpler. The traditional interpretation, which is still ominant, is that they were storehouses for agricultural produce, although cently it has been suggested rather tentatively that they might also at times ve been refuges (on the Irish pattern) or shrines.[165] In Cornwall, the same uctures are called 'fogous' (from the Cornish word for a cave), and form ıe of the most interesting classes of ancient monument in the westernmost ird of the peninsula, their entrances showing up in cattle pastures, by the alls of farmyards, in the parkland of mansions, in woodland glades and nong the bracken and boulders of uplands. There the prevailing planation has been that the souterrains were ritual structures, one proposed the 1960s and 1970s by Evelyn Clark and Patricia Christie: although the ominant figure in Cornish archaeology at the time, Charles Thomas, ggested that they might also have been byres for farm animals, or larders e noted that they were used as storehouses in modern times), he was sitive in rejecting the Irish interpretation that they had been used for fuge.[166] In 1992 this tradition was challenged directly by Rachel Maclean, ho eliminated the explanation that they had been storage places on the ounds that they were both damp and difficult of access, while structures ove ground would be better for meat and grain. Dairy produce would fare tter in them, but could be more easily kept in barrels, and beer casks ould have needed to be small in order to get through the entrances. She so opposed the idea that they had been made for ritual, because no deposits d been found in them of the sort familiar from ceremonial sites of the riod, while they were not separated from the surrounding settlements in e manner of the shrines identified elsewhere in southern Britain. She urged stead the explanation that they had been refuges in time of attack, for hich she thought them splendidly suited.[167]

By that time, however, the idea that fogous were religious structures had en taken up enthusiastically by the growing number of modern Pagans and ddess-worshippers in west Cornwall, some of whom indeed used them for remonies and meditations. It was this community that generated the finest

eld study yet made of these monuments, the work of an artist called Ian ooke who in 1993 published a first-rate gazetteer, with (as one might pect from somebody of his profession) superb visual aids, including many awings by antiquarians as well as plans, and photographs, some of which d never been published before. He also advanced a fervent defence of the ncept of fogous as sacred sites, using the particular argument that their rthern ends were aligned with the midsummer sunrise or sunset.[168] In a view of the book, an archaeologist, Peter Herring, warned that the finition of a fogou adopted in it skewed the evidence in favour of the nclusion drawn, and that the solstice alignments proposed by Cook were t proven. He followed Rachel Maclean in rejecting the theory that fogous ere designed for storage of food or drink, but instead thought it possible at they were refuges, stores for tin (in which the region is rich and which as certainly mined at the time) or cult centres.[169] With that pleasingly determinate conclusion, the debate seems to have petered out, though in 01 Sir Barry Cunliffe glanced at the matter and revived the idea of storage agricultural produce, with some 'ritual protection' of it, as the most likely rpose of the structures.[170] In Britain, at least, there is now even less rtainty as to the meaning of souterrains than there was thirty years ago.

The problem of distinguishing sacred from secular use of space in the itish Iron Age has recently extended to the heart of apparent domesticity the period, the roundhouses which were the main dwellings. It was noted rlier that their shape may have mirrored that of the ceremonial monuments the third millennium BC, and that their increasing adoption could have presented a greater importation of ritual into the home environment. This ea was given further impetus in 1995, when a team of archaeologists in the essex region pointed out that the house entrances often faced between east d south-east, the positions of the equinoctial and midwinter sunrises. This as the orientation of the Late Iron Age shrines, and both settlement teways and hill-fort entrances tended to face 'broadly' east or west, while ost bodies were laid in graves facing east. Furthermore, the team ggested, the areas for activities in the roundhouses were generally on the uthern side of the interior, and the sleeping space on the northern, which emed to mimic the movements of the sun.[171] Four years later, Mike Parker earson reinforced these points, and suggested that in the 'wheel houses' of

e Hebrides (named after their structure) the tasks of the day were generally rried out in the southern sector of the building.[172] A pan-British solar smology, tied into daily life, seemed to be taking shape. It was swiftly inted out that many Iron Age houses do not face south-east, so that the lie the land could be as important to their construction as cosmology.[173] one the less, the idea of dwellings as imbued with ritual and symbolism ught on. Francis Pryor emphasized that the burials of babies and children ere sometimes found near house doorways, as if to link youth with the sing sun which so many of the doors faced.[174]

At the same time, reservations about this kind of interpretation continued be expressed. Leo Webley argued that in southern England most undhouses showed no apparent division of activity between different lves, and those that did were concentrated around the borderline between e Bronze and Iron Ages, and were unusual cases. These were, in particular, uildings which were burnt or demolished (activities which seemed to be latively infrequent) and the deposits at them were more likely to have been ft by feasts which accompanied the destruction rather than routine tivities.[175] Rachel Pope echoed the point that the placement of roundhouse oorways was apparently dictated by the surrounding landscape as well as e movement of the sun. Even the many that faced its rising positions, she ggested, could have been intended to admit the maximum amount of light to the interior rather than reflect any symbolic significance.[176] This last gument was challenged, on the grounds that if light and warmth were the ramount factors, then the doorways should mostly have faced south, not st.[177] To this Pope riposted by considering the evidence for the layout of mestic space in tribal cultures studied by anthropologists, and finding that ly a few adopted binary oppositions of the sort suggested in the British se. Most mixed practical and symbolic factors. She acknowledged, wever, that the doorways of British roundhouses did generally face points tween east and south, and while still suggesting that the need for light may ve played a part in this, she also noted that ceremonial monuments from e Neolithic long barrows to Christian churches had a similar orientation.[178] nn Woodward and Gwilym Hughes, revisiting the evidence for deposits ithin both houses and shrines, found a strong preference for leaving them the right-hand (usually the southern) side of both (facing the entrance),

ıt that this was not a strict rule even within any one period of use. They ıncluded that the matter was ‘very complex’.[179] In the years around 2000, seemed as if a key had been found to a general symbolic code for the ritish Iron Age. A decade later nothing seems so simple, although there mains a strong feeling that, for much of the time, the daily course of the n, and the right sides of objects and places (which mirrored the rightward ovement of that course), had some significance in the layout of human aces.

Much of the earlier disinclination to look harder for ceremonial onuments was another consequence of the former tendency to rely on the ritings of ancient Romans for information on pre-Roman societies. Three them, Lucan, Pliny and Pomponius Mela, wrote that the peoples of Gaul orshipped in sacred groves of trees, while Tacitus and Cassius Dio said the me of those in Britain. This gave rise to a long-lasting modern belief that e Druids, and those to whom they ministered, preferred to hold ceremonies natural places rather than to build temples or shrines.[180] This was plainly ıt true of the peoples of southern Gaul, especially in the region now called ovence, who have long been known to have constructed substantial stone nctuaries decorated with sculpture; and the recent discovery of timber and rthen equivalents in northern France, as described, discredits it there as ell. The Roman authors may, however, not have been wholly wrong. It is ssible that the Druids themselves preferred to hold rites in natural places, pecially if Roman persecution, following conquest, drove them away from ttlements. It is also extremely likely that the British had continued to find a nse of the sacred in atmospheric parts of the natural landscape, as well as nstructing monuments, ever since the Neolithic. The presence of ritual posits in water, of which so much has now been said, is proof that this was ıe of certain lakes, pool, rivers and bogs. Sacred groves may well have ood around some of the shrines that have been identified, and the deposits pits, and they were indeed recorded as a feature of ancient European ganism everywhere that trees could flourish, both north and south of the lps, so the British are likely to have had them.[181]

Having said this, it is notable that ritual deposits have not been found at ost of the more eye-catching and majestic landscape features of Britain,

ch as rock outcrops, and that, despite the widespread modern talk of ‘eltic holy wells’, there is not much sign of religious significance being tached to springs. The main exception is the most spectacular of these in itain, the hot one at Bath which still pumps steaming water from the ound at the rate of half a million gallons each day. We know that this was cred to the Iron Age British, because the Romans recorded the name of the ddess to whom they dedicated it, Sulis, but the quantity of objects which ey actually deposited in it, or around it, still seems small compared with ose in other kinds of water.[182] Recently experts in the British Iron Age ve tended to play down the veneration of natural places, and one author, ne Webster, has done so explicitly. She has emphasized that the Celtic ord ‘nemeton’, formerly taken to mean a sacred wood, simply means a cred place, and that there is much less sign of a cult of either springs or ells in pre-Roman Britain than elsewhere in the ancient world, including reece and Rome.[183]

Current perceptions of the use of consecrated space in the period are erefore both dynamic and mutable. Almost overnight entire new categories monument can appear as candidates for admission: in Cornwall, for ample, four embanked circular enclosures which had been assumed to be eolithic were dated in 2010 to the first millennium BC. It has been ggested that they could have been local copies of the great round remonial structures of Iron Age Ireland, and that crop marks recently entified in Cornish fields may indicate the existence of hundreds more.[184] onnected to discussions of where and how the Iron Age British held rites e others, of how the beliefs of the time accommodated the presence of the, then, considerable number of monuments left in the landscape from rlier phases of prehistory. These discussions tend to occupy points on a ectrum of emphasis stretching between the work of two Richards, Bradley d Hingley. The former has made a survey of the use of English ceremonial onuments which suggests that there was virtually no continuity between e Neolithic and the Iron Age. Even at places such as Tara in Ireland, where pressive Iron Age monuments were deliberately constructed among those earlier millennia, the latter had been disused for long periods between. adley concluded that a distant and now legendary past was being corporated into the empowerment of later rulers.[185] A stress on

scontinuity would be reinforced by the evidence from the most spectacular all British Neolithic sites, Stonehenge and Avebury, which seem to have th been abandoned and neglected more in the Iron Age than in the periods her before or after: they seem, indeed, to have been actively avoided.[186] chard Hingley, by contrast, has drawn attention to the interest taken by on Age people in the remains of earlier times, including several hundred onze Age weapons and tools, collected and carefully deposited in Iron ge contexts. Some had been curated, and may have been venerated as cestral or magical objects, and used as amulets. He has also noted the use of Neolithic tomb-shrines in Scotland – especially on Orkney and the uter Hebrides by the leaving of pottery and other 'domestic' objects in em and the building of houses at them. Some pottery styles at these places parently imitated those of the Neolithic, and the new houses followed the ans of the tomb-shrine chambers: the Iron Age people themselves may ve viewed the older monuments as houses.[187]

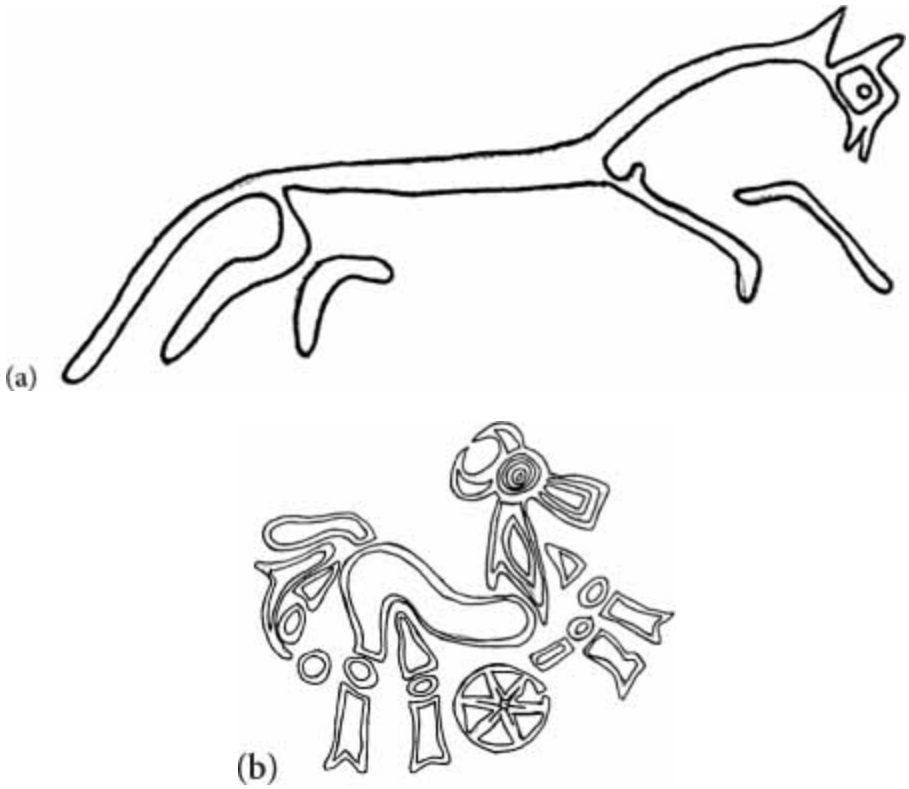
In reality there is no necessary contradiction between these positions, for ey illustrate, between them, that the Iron Age British reacted selectively to lics of the past, avoiding or demolishing some and adopting others. This uld happen according to marked regional traditions (Wessex compared to rkney, for example), but also within the same district: Tim Mallin's study the Ouse Valley in Cambridgeshire showed how some of its many eolithic ceremonial complexes may have been employed for ritual rposes in the Iron Age, but others were converted to agricultural use.[188] chard Bradley himself acknowledged that Britain has a few cases in which on Age enclosures or possible shrines were imposed upon or incorporated ose of the Neolithic, as what he termed a process of legitimization by nkage with the remote past.[189] What is missing in all this is any indication at the people of the later period had any memory of what had happened in e earlier monuments or why they had been constructed. Instead their itude seems better to correspond to the Iron Age world proposed by John arrett, in which the old monuments had become part of a mythical past, longing to a different order of existence but used to explain and justify esent social and political relationships, in the manner of myth and legend erywhere.[190]

Images and Interpretations

Back in the days – only in the recent past, but now seeming so distant – hen the label ‘Celtic’ was applied without hesitation or definition to the itish Iron Age, the material evidence for religious activity and belief was nerally interpreted within a framework created by mixing elements from ur different kinds of source: medieval Irish literature; medieval Welsh erature; the writings of ancient Greek and Roman authors about the oples of Gaul, Britain and Germany; and inscriptions and dedications om the Roman provinces that were established in those regions. This adition was established in the late nineteenth century, by an international liance of scholars of whom the most prominent British representative was obably Sir John Rhys, and continued and elaborated by a similarly broad twork of distinguished academics for most of the twentieth century.[191] uring the 1960s and 1970s the most eminent British practitioner of it was nne Ross, whose wonderfully rich and exciting book, *Pagan Celtic itain*, which appeared in 1967, revealed to a new generation the extent of e material evidence for the subject.[192] In the 1980s Miranda Green nerged as the foremost scholar to apply it.[193] Since the mid 1990s those orking in the field have become more cautious about using the fourfold stem of interpretation, and that tendency will be continued in the present ook. The special difficulties of employing medieval literature for the rpose will be discussed in its final chapter, and those of the Graeco-oman sources have already been mentioned. While the Romano-British idence is still of crucial importance for an understanding of the Iron Age, d more abundant than ever, it will be considered in the next chapter, as a eatment of the manner in which Roman and native cultures interacted after e conquest of the province. For a while longer, the prehistoric British aterial will continue to be analysed in its own right, in order to see of what consists when viewed without the use of perspectives gained from other riods and cultures.

One major and celebrated limitation in doing this is the reluctance of the ehistoric British to create physical representations of the divine beings hom they venerated. As a result, the possible religious images that we do ssess from the last phase of prehistory in the island are few and enigmatic.

y far the most spectacular is the White Horse carved on to the northern arp of the Berkshire Downs above the village of Uffington by stripping vay topsoil to reveal the chalk rock beneath. Having been celebrated since e Middle Ages as one of the great ancient monuments of Britain, it was ıally dated in the late 1990s, using a brand new method to determine the ge of chalk figures (optically stimulated luminescence), to between 1740 d 210 BC, with a 68 per cent chance of a time between 1380 and 550. The chaeological evidence favours a point towards the end of that latter span, cause there is little sign of activity on the hill where it was made during e Late Bronze Age, whereas at the opening of the Iron Age a fort was built rectly above where the figure now sprawls.[194] Strictly speaking, it may not a horse, as its stylized shape could conceal a dragon, cat or dog, but a rse remains the most likely, not least because a fairly similar image pears on the coins of the three tribes which, by the time that the Romans rived, occupied territories that met roughly where the carving is situated, e Catuvellauni, Atrebates and Dobunni. That image is certainly equine, cause the make of coin is derived in each case, by various stages across ırope, from the Macedonian currency which displayed the sun chariot of e god Apollo. By the time it reached Britain, nothing was usually sleft of is but a horse and a wheel, which may have had its own resonance in rthern Europe as the wheel appears in Bronze Age Scandinavian rock rvings as a clear solar symbol, carried in a cart or chariot across the sky.[195] hat the White Horse itself meant, however, is anybody's guess: it may, for ample, have been associated with a deity, or been a banner flaunted by a rticular people on their border, or a common symbol for a number of oples, marking a place at which they could meet to trade and negotiate.[196] or is there any solution to the associated problem of why this particular hill gure managed to survive into the Middle Ages and beyond and how many hers, like or unlike it, were allowed to become overgrown and be lost ong the way.



59 Figure (a) is the form of the famous, and unique, Uffington White Horse (or cat, dog or ıgon). Figure (b) is taken from a coin, in the author's possession, minted by the Dobunni, one of the n Age tribes that may have occupied the territory in which the horse was carved. There is a basic istic similarity, but not a close one. The image on the coin derives originally from a chariot horse on Macedonian currency which was ultimately the inspiration for the British one, and only one wheel the vehicle remains; that may have been repaired because the spoked wheel was a symbol of the ı, or of the sky, in northern European cosmology at the time.

Talk of coinage raises another difficulty: that the first coins struck by the itish do show many images that are clearly those of goddesses and gods. e can be sure of this because they were copied from Continental originals, ostly Roman, and may have had no significance to the British other than dicating money. This is not to say that the coins themselves necessarily d the status of currency in the strict commercial sense. They were so nited in distribution and so often associated with ritual deposits that they ay have been tokens given by rulers to their followers rather than a edium for buying and selling commodities. Indeed, it is possible that the itish fully recognized the Graeco-Roman deities on the coins as divine ings, and had even become familiar with the myths and rites that the

omans attached to them, which would have given the objects themselves a rther spiritual value.[197] There are also abstract designs on the coinage, and hn Creighton has suggested, following the relevant tradition of terpreting Palaeolithic images, that they are like those images similar to apes perceived by humans in altered states of consciousness; for this ason, he thought they might have been associated with Druids in their pacity as seers. It is a plausible and attractive idea, but not susceptible to oof.[198] Yet, occasional images do appear on them which seem to be those native deities, and perhaps the most striking is on a silver one dating to e early first century AD, found in England and now in the National useum of Wales. It shows a bearded male head with a crown bearing a heel – perhaps once again a solar symbol – and apparent antlers rising om the sides. The antlers may, however, be part of the crown, and the earer a king or priest rather than a god. None the less, it is a remarkable rsonification of the symbols which the makers associated with masculine wer, human or divine.

None of the possible ceremonial sites datable to the British Iron Age has elded a single generally agreed visual representation of a deity.[199] The gures that have sometimes been regarded as religious icons have come om other contexts, especially taking the form of wooden figurines trieved from the locations, mostly wetlands, which have preserved them. here are just three British sites that have produced such finds with a proven te in late prehistory: Ballachulish in Argyll, Roos Carr in East Yorkshire d Kingsteignton in south Devon, spanning between them a maximum riod between 728 to 352, and a minimum between 524 and 426 BC. The e from Scotland is of alder wood, and may be female although the sex is rdly emphasized, while that from Devon has been called male and is of k; sexual ambiguity seems the case at Roos Carr. The Ballachulish image d agate eyes and may have stood in a wicker hut in the bog where it was und. All have been taken as divine beings, but there may be other planations, such as that they were effigies of enemies who were being mbolically drowned or interred by being deposited in such places or of iminals who should have been killed and dumped there but had escaped. he wicker structure apparently surrounding the example from Argyll may ve been intended to confine it or weigh it down, rather than representing a

rine.[200] In 1967–9 about fifteen small, crudely carved stone figures were und at Garton Slack in the East Riding of Yorkshire, not far from Roos arr. Over half had swords, and there were holes in their bases as if to eady them when they were set up for display. All but one lacked a head d others were badly scratched, so that their condition points to deliberate mage, before all were left in a ditch. Melanie Giles has plausibly ggested that they might have been made as dolls, gaming pieces, or ages of enemies to ensure their destruction, but favours the explanation at they represented household gods or ancestors, because they had been splayed before burial. This is entirely possible, but all of the other planations also favour a need for them to have been set upright.[201]

60 This enigmatic face, god, king, chief or Druid, adorns a silver coin from the first century AD, und in Hampshire. It is now in the National Museum of Wales. The crown upon the head is corated with antlers and a mounted wheel, perhaps a solar or celestial symbol. Around the head are stract designs of the sort common on Iron Age coinage.

61 The carved wooden statuette found in the bog at Ballachulish, Argyll, and now in the National ıseum of Antiquities of Scotland. Its appearance conveys well the difficulty of establishing the sex, alone the nature and purpose, of these images, though this one seems to have been fashioned to be ɔunted on a stand.

Anne Ross gave fresh impetus to an earlier idea that the Iron Age ritish, and their Irish and Continental neighbours, had a cult of the human ad, as symbolic of divine and spiritual power. The evidence for this nsisted of the prominence of heads on decorated metalwork and on onework; of the existence of complete carved stone heads; and of the currence of human skulls in ritual deposits and apparently as decoration of me hill fort defences.[202] It remains a tenable hypothesis but thus far lacks oof, as the undoubted frequency with which the motif appears could have her explanations. Posidonius, our ancient eyewitness cited above, stated mly that head-hunting in Gaul was simply a by-product of warfare, tended to provide trophies. Anthropological studies of recent tribal peoples ho have conserved and displayed human heads have found that the practice

either explained by the same impulse or by a wish to preserve and revere rts of ancestors. Sarah Ralph and Ian Armit, who have made recent studies the evidence – the latter more extensively – have agreed that a special eatment of the human head is apparent in Iron Age art and deposits in rth-western Europe. Ralph has suggested that it could be accounted for in rms of trophy-taking, while Armit's view is that it can be explicable as that tivity, but also in other contexts and periods as associated with rites of rtility and renewal, and veneration of ancestors.[203] Like so many others, erefore, this matter remains open. So does the different question of hether certain objects from the period were functional or ritual, or both, ch as the polished metal mirrors, often beautifully engraved, found refully deposited in graves, wetlands and pits. Jody Joy, who has blished the best study of them, suggests that they could equally have been ed for personal vanity, or in rites of divination, or to reflect the sun's rays ceremonies.[204]

Among those who have considered the possible meanings of Iron Age agery since the 1990s, none has continued to do so with such termination and energy as Miranda Aldhouse-Green, who has made nstant attempts to break out of the constrictions of the traditional fourfold ethodology outlined above. Her focus has remained on the iconography of rth-western and Central Europe during the prehistoric Iron Age and the cceeding Roman period. Most of her material has been drawn from the ter, but she can easily point to continuities between the two epochs and ross the different Roman provinces of the region that can be argued to present particular styles of native imagery which mark it off from other eas of Europe. Among the common themes that she has noted are the position of cauldrons in marshes, perhaps holding offerings of food or ink and seeming to show a link between these objects and water with a mbolic pairing of life and death; an interest in shape-shifting between man and animal, so that motifs often combine the two forms; and a rticular significance accorded to the number three, so that some kinds of ject, being and character (but not all) often appear in triple form. She has own how the blurring of lines between species was accompanied by an uivalent ambiguity in representing gender, and a disinclination to stinguish clearly between the human and divine. When human and animal

ere combined, special types of beast were chosen, namely horses, dogs, ags and bulls, and the stag above all: indeed, its antlers were sometimes ven to female human-like figures as well as male. At the least, all this ausibly suggests a spirituality which depended on a regular sense of ossing ‘natural’ boundaries and of fluidity of identity, and perhaps the ecial status of individual experts within it who mediated between the uman and other worlds. Another of Miranda Aldhouse-Green’s insights is at ancient images were probably not passive objects to be contemplated d consumed as works of art, but ‘dynamic tools used by the communities hich produced and consumed them’. Thus the same image may have had fferent meanings in different contexts, while apparently similar shapes and rms could have belonged to completely different symbolic categories.[205] uch acute observations reinforce an impression that much of the content of on Age belief must remain forever unknown, although (and this also needs be emphasized) the forms and imprints of it can be recovered in better and tter detail.

Final Thoughts

In keeping with the general tone and preoccupations of this book, the esent chapter has stressed the intractable nature of much of the evidence, d the diversity of conclusions that can be drawn from it. Despite this, it is ssible to mystify Iron Age religion too much, for certain broad nclusions can be drawn with a fair degree of safety. We can be certain that e pre-Roman British believed in and honoured a large number of ddesses and gods, with powers and functions related to the natural world to human concerns and activities, and often particular to specific localities d peoples. This is partly because the British are revealed as doing exactly is as soon as the Romans arrived among them, and partly just because all uropean pagans did so. Likewise, we can be sure that they practised animal crifice, in at least its minimal form: that the beasts consumed at festivities ere consecrated to deities before being slaughtered and eaten; this is, again, cause it was a universal custom across pagan Europe.[206] The remains of estock found on Iron Age ceremonial sites, and often on other kinds of e, would probably have been the consequence of this rite. It is also ssible to reconstruct the festive calendar of the ancient British, in outline,

ɔm historic records and comparative data.[207] We can be positive that it cluded feasting and merrymaking at midwinter, because this season was ɔserved all over Europe as it emerges into history, and an equivalent lebration at midsummer which included protective and blessing rites volving fire, because this too was found throughout the Continent. There ɔuld also have been festivals and ceremonies to open the four seasons, and pecially summer and winter, for these too were observed across large areas northern Europe. This would represent a cycle of six major annual points festivity, and there would probably have been others tied more nctionally to the completion of especially demanding and important ɡricultural processes such as sheep-shearing and the grain harvest.[208]

The emphasis on the right side in burial customs and (perhaps) domestic yout is almost certainly related to a belief that it is lucky to turn to the right hen moving, in the direction in which the sun moves in this hemisphere d which the modern age calls clockwise. This remained widespread in ɔrthern Europe until recent times: the Gaelic term for the sunwise – rtunate and proper – direction for ritualized movement is *deosil*. There is ewitness testimony to its use in ancient north-western Europe from the reek traveller Posidonius, who stated that the people of Gaul thought it verent to turn to the right.[209] It may be noted once more, however, that no neral application of it is visible in the British evidence: some burial tterns emphasized the left, perhaps because it indicated the world of the rk and the dead. We can also be certain that the pre-Roman British ɔssessed some sort or sorts of belief in the survival of the soul after death, ɔt only because this is also general among traditional peoples but because reek and Roman authors noted that such a belief was held with unusual rvour among the natives of north-western Europe. They did not, however, ɡree on its actual content, some asserting that those natives thought souls ere expected to be reborn in different bodies on this earth, while others ported a conviction that people would continue to exist with their customed identities and bodies, but in a parallel world.[210]

It can thus be proposed that the modern age need not be wholly ignorant the religious system of the British upon the edge of history. We possess an ɯtline of its most important aspects, which is coherent enough and can be

stained from historical sources. Within that, however, are still many blank aces, which can be filled in according to individual and subjective taste, ing an ever expanding body of material evidence. This is arguably not a d point to have reached, in which all interested in the subject have both me essential common ground, and a very large remaining potential for rsonal instinct and inclination to operate freely in reimagining the past.

5

THE ROMAN IMPACT

TEMPLES, STATUES AND INSCRIPTIONS

THE MODERN BRITISH have always expressed mixed feelings about the oman conquest of most of their island. On the one hand, the Romans ssessed many attributes – and introduced them to large areas of Europe – hich have defined progress and civilization, and indeed modernity, for ost Europeans: a fully developed state with law codes, coinage, a ofessional army and civil service; proper towns with large public buildings ilt enduringly of stone; and a sophisticated literature. For their medieval ccessors across most of the Continent, they provided the model of what a oper form of government and culture should be. This deep respect for em, and tendency to identify with them, only increased as the modern placed the medieval, because of three factors which affected the British ore than most other peoples. The first was the growth of a standard system collective education for the elite (which increasingly included ambitious embers of the middle classes), that placed a heavy stress on Roman texts. ıe second was the acquisition of a colonial empire containing huge ımbers of peoples with more traditional societies and cultures, the moral stification for which was one that the Romans had articulated to explain d extol their own conquests: that incorporation into that empire brought e blessings of civilization to humans who otherwise would have continued live with all the shortcomings of savagery or barbarism. The third was the dustrialization of Britain, a process in which it led the rest of the veloped world, which induced a still deeper respect for the Romans' ıdoubted skills in engineering and mass production.

The problem with all this, which remained significant even at the apogee the British love affair with Rome, was that the Romans had still arrived in itain as foreign and often brutal conquerors, who slaughtered and enslaved ose who resisted them and compelled obedience to a distant ruler over

hose opinions and actions the natives had no control. It was very tempting feel sympathy for the leaders of resistance to this invasion, such as oudica, Caractacus and Calgacus, a reaction aided by the fact that the omans themselves – whose histories are the only source of information on ese figures – depicted them as heroic adversaries. During the Victorian riod in which the reasons for admiration for Rome were most compelling, d the long cultural hangover from it which lasted until the middle of the entieth century, the British provided a range of solutions to the nundrum. Some were unequivocally supportive of the Romans, and some completely hostile to them, while many settled on a compromise, of aising them for their discipline, sophistication and technological prowess, d the British for their courage and love of freedom. In some works this ok the form of a suggestion that the subsequent inhabitants of Britain had mbined the best of both sets of qualities, while in others it became a assic contrast between civilization and noble savagery, with a yearning for e liberty and colour of the latter coupled with a grudging recognition that e former would, and should, always prevail. Such difficulties were always ongest when the arrival of the Roman presence in Britain was considered, d largely disappeared when attention shifted to the final phase, of its llapse. By then the Romans were Christians, a fact which caused most of e modern British to identify still more readily with them, and they could edibly (if still not to the satisfaction of everybody) be regarded as the fenders of most of the island against new, savage and heathen, attackers. uch a view of them intensified during the mid twentieth century, with the ssolution of Britain's own empire and the disappearance of several other miliar features of the nation generating profound fears among many itons of a loss of role and identity.[1]

The passage of the world into a post-colonial phase, in the second half of e century, intensified hostility to the Roman occupation, even while it ntinued to play a prominent part in the British historical imagination: velists in the 1990s and 2000s regularly treated the subject as a means of ploring the relationships between civilization and barbarism; social ntrol and social freedom; and mainstream society and its critics. Rarely, w, did they accord the Romans much sympathy.[2] Unsurprisingly, the same ttern revealed itself in the publications of archaeologists. Few were as

atant in their linkage of past and present politics as Francis Pryor, who clared that both the Roman and British empires had ‘offended against all ncepts of natural justice’, called the Roman conquest of Britain a ‘black oment’ and claimed that prehistory had given the British ‘a belief in dividual freedom’.[3] A different depreciation of the Roman role in Britain nphasized that the coming of imperial rule left the daily lives of the great ajority of the native population completely unaffected. It suggested that all e manifestations of Roman civilization in the island were superficial reign importations which collapsed and disappeared as soon as imperial le was withdrawn, leaving native customs and institutions to reassert emselves.[4] The most common reaction to such views has been to stress the mplexity of Romano-British colonial identities and reject the concepts of oman’ and ‘native’ as static, monolithic and homogeneous categories. his was a concomitant of a general scholarly tendency in the years around 00 to regard ethnicity and identity as actively created traits, specific to rticular situations. Not only did the British participate in Roman behaviour different ways, but there was no single Roman way of life to be resisted, opted or adapted. Roman habits were only one component of the manner which people in the province would have constructed their own image and lf-image, along with region, gender, age, occupation and class. The ocess by which they were adopted depended on many kinds of actor, cluding imperial officials and merchants, retired soldiers, and allied native lers and nobles, who operated in different ways. There could have been no mmon set of values and understandings that mapped out exactly what was eded to ‘become Roman’, let alone any agreement that one should, cause Roman culture was itself a cosmopolitan fusion of influences with ry diverse points of origin.[5]

When all this is acknowledged, however, there are still certain broad ronological and regional patterns to be discerned. As should be obvious om the previous chapter, Roman cultural influence was already having a ofound impact on south-eastern Britain, and so dividing the island into ore and less Romanized zones, before the conquest. The conquest merely presented a dramatic acceleration and intensification of this process, not e commencement of it. The broad history of the occupation is also clear. ithin fifty years of arrival, Roman rule had reached its greatest extent,

lting at the edge of the Scottish Highlands; after that its northern frontier avered between the Forth–Clyde and Tyne–Solway lines for another ntury, before finally being drawn along the latter, marked by Hadrian's all. This left two-thirds of Britain, including most of its mineral resources d agriculturally profitable lowlands, in Roman hands, along with the ands of Wight and Anglesey, and the Scillies. Most of what is now otland, and Man and the Hebrides, remained outside them, and retained a tive culture little affected by Roman goods or customs: effectively, those gions were prehistoric until the early Middle Ages. Roman Britain itself is ly partly within the bounds of historical time, as the relevant texts are too w and episodic to allow a full narrative of political and military events ere. On the other hand, the archaeology is so rich that a social and onomic history of the province can now be provided, and reveals certain ajor features.

One is the great size and importance of the military garrison, ncentrated overwhelmingly in the north, where most of the land itself may ve remained in state ownership. In the second century it numbered 55,000, aking it the largest permanently stationed in any Roman province, and so it possible that, quantitatively and perhaps qualitatively, the army was oportionately more significant to British life than it was to any other part the empire.[6] We know more about it than any other aspect of Roman-itish society, because it has left the most evidence, in histories, scriptions and material objects. It introduced or increased the quantity of oman goods in many parts of the island, stimulating local industries and tracting imports.[7] Another spectacular aspect of Roman rule was the undation of planned towns across the lowlands, with a street grid, ruling uncils, and imposing public buildings of the classical Mediterranean style. third consisted of the network of state-built and state-maintained roads, aking towns and forts and equipped with milestones and rest-houses. It mains true that even wealthy rural householders showed little sign of ying or being given Roman objects during the first two centuries of perial rule, a fact which fits the argument for superficial Romanization. nother point in favour of that is the apparent failure of the planned towns. comparison with those elsewhere in the empire, they attracted few public nstructions or inscriptions, and their existing communal buildings were

caying badly by the third century, when they were also in serious decline commercial and industrial centres. None the less, even in this earlier riod Roman government would have altered the existence of all its British bjects in certain respects, disarming them, replacing their accustomed lers, imposing systematic and formal taxation upon them, and perhaps acing them in contact with large numbers of foreign peoples, constructions d institutions. They would also have been submitted to, or enabled to nbrace, a widespread process of continued farming improvements, cluding further woodland and marsh clearance, deeper ploughing and an pansion in both the quantity and diversity of cereal crops. This, and olonged internal peace, allowed the population of the province to increase what was almost certainly a new level, of three to four million, which ould probably not be surpassed again until the Tudor period. Such a nclusion has been made possible by recent aerial surveys which have vealed a hitherto unsuspected density of settlement.[8]

During the third and fourth centuries, the economic and social derpinning of the province altered significantly. Britain became one of the ost peaceful and prosperous parts of an empire beset by civil war and vasion, and the institutions which had been the most obvious markers of e Roman presence there changed in nature and relative importance. The ze of the garrison fell to between ten and twenty thousand, but it also came more static and hereditary, producing a civilian community mbering 50,000 to 200,000 in the northern military zone which was voted to supporting and producing soldiers. While the planned towns lost portance as commercial, industrial and civic centres, they retained it as ministrative foci and gained some as gathering places for the local istocracy. Increasingly, the lowlands were divided up into estates based on rge country houses, the villas, of which around five hundred existed by the urth century and which were decorated and equipped in the manner of the oman elite throughout the empire. Across the lowland areas small towns so appeared, which had considerable importance as commercial and dustrial centres and dealt in goods, especially pottery, which were creasingly produced in the province but made in the Roman style. By the urth century, these goods were found even in ordinary dwellings in the untryside, as were coins, as low-value currency issues now penetrated

ost parts of British society and brought it into a money economy for the st time. Villages multiplied as part of the same process, and it could be id that by the middle of the fourth century Britain had become as omanized as any other province, retaining a tincture of native culture but cognizably part of a system of loyalties, attitudes, commodities and values hich extended as far as the Sahara, the Euphrates and the Danube.[9]

This, then, is the context for a study of Romano-British religion. There is asonably good evidence for the nature of that in Rome itself, and the same ligion suffused the political, military and administrative structures that the omans brought to Britain, and the lives of many of the personnel who erated them.[10] It depended on the concept of a huge number of divine or mi-divine beings, some of which were attached to particular peoples and man activities and some to particular natural forces or places. It was safe r a Roman to assume that an individual guardian was associated with each gnificant feature of a given landscape and that, if her or his local name ere not known, this being should be honoured simply as the *genius loci*, e spirit of the place. An individual *genius* also attached itself to every man tween birth and death (and a *juno* to every woman), acting as a divine unterpart and guardian. This made it a natural duty for all inhabitants of e empire to honour and encourage the guardian spirit (in this case usually lled the numen) of the reigning emperor, both to care for him and to able him to rule well. An especially good ruler was revered upon death by e belief that he had become one with his numen and could now be granted e honours of a divinity (a distinction also accorded to a few empresses). ouses and fields had their attendant spiritual guardians, the lares and nates, to whom each household would pay regular respects. Roman deities nded to be functional: thus, there were ten goddesses (or perhaps ten pects of the same goddess as the distinction is not made clear), who esided over different processes in cereal farming. Five more deities, ddesses and gods, were concerned with the broader activities of griculture, down to Sterculinus, the god who had a special care for manure. hildbirth, often a complex and potentially lethal business, attracted the otection of seven goddesses and a god, who specialized in different oments and aspects of it. Each military unit was expected regularly to nour a list of about a dozen divinities with a particular interest in war.

here was, strictly speaking, no native Roman mythology about divine ings – no home-grown traditions of their origins, deeds and family lationships – although Greek myths about equivalent deities became tached to those of Rome as part of the general Roman acquisition of many aits of Greek culture. The Greeks themselves had acquired this way of inking about divinities from the Near East, and it therefore seems likely at the peoples of north-western Europe, including the ancient British, were more inclined to make stories about their deities, spontaneously, than the omans had been.

New cults were welcome in Rome, as long as they did not break the law keep the neighbours awake, and were formally approved by the Senate. hese could take the form of the worship of long-revered deities from reign lands, arriving in the city, or of new forms of reverence paid to vinities who had just revealed themselves to devotees. Likewise, Romans avelling abroad would both take with them the rites dedicated to their miliar divine patrons and expect, very often, to honour the deities of the nds which they entered. This general tolerance of religions not their own me during the imperial period to have one notorious exception: ristianity, because it rejected the whole premise upon which the pagan oman religious system depended, by condemning all spiritual beings cept its own god and his servants as demons. The Christians' hostility tended to a refusal to honour the emperor's numen, which to most omans was to disown membership of the state. Such a direct clash of eologies sometimes resulted in savage persecution of Christians, but this ems to have been officially directed in a total of less than ten of the two ndred and fifty years in which Christianity existed under pagan rulers in e western half of the empire. Roman paganism had no theology in the rmal sense of the word, the great questions about the nature of the cosmos ing left to philosophers, who were divided between competing schools hich provided different answers. The most pressing question, for most mans, of the fate of the individual personality after death, was likewise swered in many different ways. Between them the schools covered most the answers proposed by humans throughout recorded time, including livion, a passage to a place of reward or punishment, rebirth in a new dy, or a universal journey to a spirit world.

Participation in religion was very much an individual choice. People uld ignore it more or less completely, as long as they did not attack or ock the rites of others. Most would honour their household spirits and take rt in the great seasonal festivals of their community, dedicated to rticular local deities. In addition, they would probably try to contact one in oments of particular need related to issues of health, occupation, family, ovement or general fortune. The most critical of these moments would ovoke votive offerings, gifts promised to an individual divine helper if the ter granted a request. Some people, in whom the religious instinct was pecially strong, would place themselves for life in the care of a specific ddess or god, or a specific set of deities. Such a spectrum of dealings was perfect reflection, in the divine sphere, of relations with powerful human ings. Increasingly, as the imperial epoch progressed, the most dedicated of ese inherently devout individuals entered the growing number of mystery ligions, centred on a particular deity or divine couple, such as Mithras, Isis d Serapis, Dionysus, or Cybele and Atys. Unlike other forms of religion, ese were carried on in private shrines, by worshippers who underwent ining and initiation, and sometimes progression through a series of grades which learning was incrementally revealed. Their rites were usually cret, and those who engaged in them could not merely achieve an unusual tensity of religious experience and feel themselves to be part of a spiritual ite, but could receive assurance of a better chance of well-being in both life d death. These mystery religions would also have afforded the practical mfort, for individuals who had a mobile lifestyle – soldiers, administrators d merchants – of a group of companions with common interests and periences, in most parts of the empire to which they were posted or eded to travel; an ancient equivalent, to some extent, of Freemasonry.

The variety of deities was to some extent balanced by a greater nformity of sacred places and actions. Places of worship generally nsisted of an enclosure, separating off the mundane world, which ntained a platform on which was erected a temple, with a cult statue of the ity to which it was dedicated. The temple itself was regarded mostly as a cal home for the goddess or god concerned, and as a setting for prayer but t for routine ritual. That was usually concentrated on a stone altar built side the enclosure and away from the temple, at which the key rite of

oman paganism was performed: sacrifice. This was in essence the esentation of a gift to the deity concerned; this could consist of the burning incense, or the offering of flowers, fruit, or libations of wine, honey and her fluids. Blood sacrifice, the giving of an animal life, was the most estigious, as meat was the most expensive and valuable food. Very little of was sacrificed in the modern sense, because generally only the least edible rts of the animal, and some of the internal organs, were burned as ferings to the deity in whose honour it was slaughtered. The rest was nsumed by the worshippers, so that the rite was in fact the consecration of feast. Moreover, the animal was expected to be killed without showing her pain or fear, so that the act of slaughter was probably a good deal ore humane than those inflicted in the normal processes of preparing mestic animals for the table. Blood sacrifice was in theory a ritual carried t only by men, who were responsible for the conduct of all public ligious ritual, but women could officiate for themselves or each other and sist or accompany male rites.

This was a form of religion which embodied no divine revelation and pended on no books, dogmas or orthodoxy, resting instead entirely on escribed ceremonies. It had no specific founder or leader, no concept of nversion, made no demands on foreigners and was centred on the mmunity and not on the individual. It left ethics to society to prescribe, eed worshippers to decide how to venerate their own deities, and aimed for rthly well-being, not salvation in the next life. It had no concept of sin, ough a very active one of blasphemy and impiety. Every citizen could act a priest, and every public act was a religious one. Though there were ecialist priests and priestesses who offered their skills for hire or as a cial duty, they did not act as mediators or theologians and had no personal nctity; indeed, they usually had mundane daily occupations. In the mystery ligions they seem to have needed a greater sense of vocation and to have ted more as mentors, but this was apparently only a difference of degree. lthough the religions of Rome are better recorded than those of anywhere se in ancient Western Europe, there is not much sign that they were gnificantly different from those in the rest of the Continent.[11] Apart from e greater enthusiasm for mythology, Greek religions – about which we ow at least as much – were very similar in all basic respects, and indeed,

ve for a greater emphasis in places upon a professional priesthood, so were ose across the entire ancient Near East. To the British, there would have en nothing very alien about the essence of the religious system that their oman conquerors brought with them.

Given this context, it is time to examine some of the practical problems volved in determining the nature and extent of the Roman impact on native itish religious beliefs and practices. Guy de la Bédoyère has assembled a ecklist of these, beginning with the problem, general to archaeology, that much of the evidence consisted of materials which would not survive in e record: altars of wood or turf, wooden vessels, and offerings of food, ink, blood, incense, ashes or crops.[12] He also warned that the evidence for itain may be distorted by the concentration of it in the most Romanized of es, above all military stations but also towns and villas. It may be added at the nature of the concentrations are mismatched, as most of the scriptions are from the north and west of the province and most of the mples and burials in the south and east. Guy de la Bédoyère's conclusion as that 'religion in Roman Britain is a subject we barely understand'.[13] On e other hand, there is certainly plenty of data, for more temples and shrines e mentioned in inscriptions from the province than any other class of ilding, and altars and tombstones account for the vast majority of its scribed stones. Large numbers of structured deposits have now been scovered, and extensive cemeteries, with an array of other material finds at may be related to ritual. With all the caveats that have just been entered, attempt can now be made to ascertain what is currently known of oman-British religion.

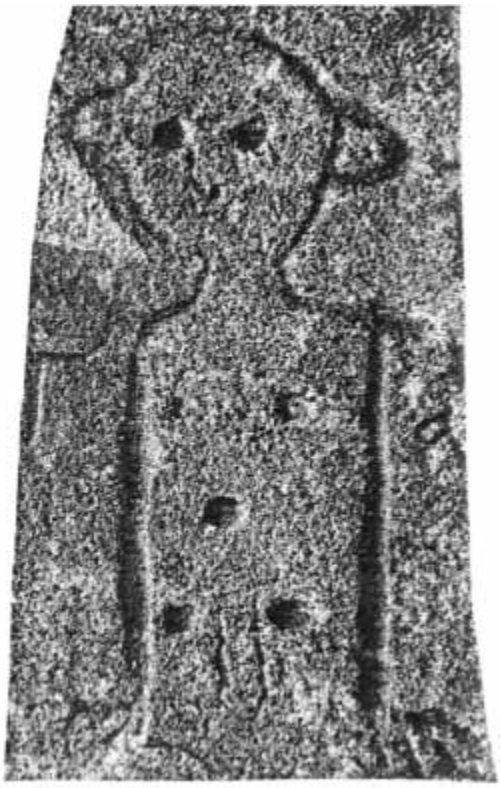
Deities

During the 1980s and early 1990s, experts in that religion were divided er the emphasis that should be placed on the Roman and British mponents of it: Miranda Aldhouse-Green, Graham Webster and Guy de la édoyère were of the opinion that the conquerors merely laid a classical editerranean veneer over the native system, while Martin Henig and Joan lcock believed that the latter was more thoroughly Romanized.[14] The bate petered out inconclusively, largely because of the nature of the idence. The bulk of this comes from the most Romanized sites, as said,

d not enough is known of pre-Roman British religion to allow omanization to be measured against it with any precision. There is no way knowing whether it was a Roman or a native who carried out a particular ligious act, or erected a particular religious structure, unless the person ncerned recorded her or his identity. In the majority of cases that did not ppen, and where it did, a Roman name may hide a Romanized Briton. ith regard to a question which lay at the heart of the debate – that of which ities were honoured in the province – the archaeological record shows a ixture of native and imported cults, varying not just by the ethnic identity the worshipper but by social class, region and even individual. The result to provide enough material to support either side of the debate, and not ough to resolve it.

Certainly Roman deities are well represented in Britain, above all piter, Mars and Mercury who between them covered most human concerns cluding government, weather, trade, travel, farming, war and death. ercules, Venus, Diana, Silvanus and Minerva also occur. They are found ost often in East Anglia and the Midlands and the northern military zone – e most Romanized areas – but are scattered across most of the province.[15] ne imperial cult also features to an extent fairly typical of an outlying part the empire, with colleges established by merchants to carry it on in the ies of London, York and Lincoln, dedications to it in East Anglia, Sussex d Oxfordshire, and small busts of emperors proving that it was maintained rural areas of what is now eastern England. A massive temple was nstructed at the town of Colchester to honour Claudius, the ruler who had dered and presided over the establishment of the province.[16] Some of the ystery cults also entered Britain during the period of Roman rule.[17] That of e Asian goddess Cybele and her son Atys is attested at London by finds in e River Thames, a bust of the god and a serrated bronze clamp decorated ith busts of the two deities, which may have been used to castrate the iests of the cult; this surrender of their manhood would have been the focal ent of initiation into its service. The Graeco-Egyptian religion of the ddess Isis and her consort Serapis was given a temple at York, while an age, an inscribed jug and an amulet all dedicated to Isis may point to its esence in and around London. Most firmly established was the cult of the viour god Mithras, which was said to have come from Persia. In the

estern Roman Empire it was a closed religious society of men, especially ldiers, and its characteristic long rectangular shrines have been found at ondon and York, on Hadrian's Wall and at the fort which guarded the enai Strait between Wales and Anglesey and was the forerunner of the edieval town of Caernarvon. Altars dedicated to Mithras have been found Musselburgh, to the east of Edinburgh. The deity associated with a ystery religion who was apparently most widespread in Britain was the reek god Dionysus, under his Roman name of Bacchus, who is represented statues and statuettes and on incised vessels, mirrors and mosaics. owever, as patron of wine, he may simply have been celebrated in the ovince as a general symbol of festivity and encouragement to it, rather an as a focus for special rites. It seems likely, however, that it was his ysteries that were being indicated in a mosaic in the villa at Brading, on e eastern side of the Isle of Wight, because another mosaic pavement there ems to portray the mysteries of the goddesses Demeter and Persephone at eusis in Greece, and yet another the rites of Cybele: the owner was clearly connoisseur of initiatory traditions.



62 A classical Roman deity: the god Mars, represented in a bronze figurine commissioned by the lasuni brothers, Bruccius and Caratius, who also dedicated it, loyally, to the guardian spirits of the perors of Rome. Found in the East Midlands.

63 This image illustrates well the difficulties of interpreting many representations of deities in the ovince. Found on an altar in the northern military zone, it must therefore depict a god. Is it, wever, Mars, and the protrusions on the head a helmet; or wings, in which case he would be ercury; or horns, for a local divinity who bore them; or none of the above? It is impossible to tell. awn from an exhibition in the Carlisle Museum.

64 A thoroughly Roman figurine of a thoroughly Roman goddess: the ‘Venus of Verulamium’, ınd in the ruins of that city and now in the museum there, near St Albans. Drawn from a replica in possession of the author.

65 This is also Venus, bathing with a pair of nymphs in attendance, but the classically Greek and man subject has been crudely rendered by a provincial carver. It was found at the fort of High chester, in the Hadrian's Wall zone. This image was drawn from the original when it was in the ıseum of Antiquities at Newcastle University.

The mention of Asiatic, Egyptian and Greek divinities signals another pect of religion in Roman Britain: that many goddesses and gods arrived it from parts of the empire far distant from Rome. A few came directly ɔm the east to the northern forts and the settlements that served them, such Hercules of Tyana, who was honoured, with an attendant priestess, at the wn that became Corbridge, near Hadrian's Wall.[18] Many more derived ɔm the other northern provinces, such as Gaul and Germany, which ovided many military units and settlers to Britain, both because of their lative proximity to it and because their people were better accustomed to e climate. The most important were the Matres, the 'Mothers', who were nerated across a wide expanse of the northern Roman Empire with an icentre in the Rhineland. Images of them took the standard form of three ately ladies, standing or (more usually) seated in a row, and often holding shes, bread, fruit or flowers. Sometimes one of them, in the same form, as shown alone. They were especially popular with soldiers serving in the itish garrison, all but eleven of their fifty or so dedications or presentations from the province having been found on military sites; and deed no other deities attracted such spontaneous enthusiasm among the cupying army. It seems that they functioned as protecting and nurturing gures, perhaps of a kind profoundly reassuring to people caught up in the obility and insecurity of military life. There is, however, no literature on em which could explain their nature and popularity, and this lack also events certainty as to whether it is always the same goddesses who are ing represented: inscriptions often honour them as specifically the others of particular countries or institutions.[19]

66 The famous relief of Mithras, the deity at the centre of the most celebrated of Roman mystery igions, slaying the bull which represented cosmic darkness, which once decorated the temple of thras at London. It was the gift of a veteran of the Second Legion.

Another importation from the Rhineland and who seem to have iginated in the district around Trier and were sometimes associated in rvings with one of the Mothers, were the enigmatic *Genii cucullati* or ooded spirits'. These were also usually shown as a trio of figures, standing cing the viewer and characterized by the fact that all wear the hooded oak or *cucullatus* popular in the northern provinces of the empire. About enty reliefs of them have been found in Britain. At times, across their hole European range, representations of them carry swords, eggs or loaves, d their associations seem, like those of the Mothers, to have been with nevolence and protection.[20] Precisely the same qualities were manifested another divinity apparently imported from Gaul, the goddess Rosmerta, ne Good Giver', who was represented with an axe, apparently to sum up r role as a guardian, and a barrel of food or drink or a butter churn, presenting her provision of plenty.[21] Images that strongly resemble her ve been found in and around the Cotswold Hills, which is also the area in hich the Matres and the *Genii cucullati* are most commonly recorded

ıtside the northern military zone. Why civilians should have adopted these ɔntinental deities in that particular western region of Britain is a question which there is no easy answer. The area concerned was the heartland of a itish tribe called the Dobunni, who may have taken especially to these reign deities, perhaps because they had some of their own who rresponded to them. On the other hand, wealthy refugees from Gaul and e Rhineland may have settled in the Cotswold region in the third century, hen their own provinces were badly disrupted by invasion and civil war, d brought their divine protectors with them. The problem sums up in iniature the whole difficulty of using the occurrence of deities as evidence r the extent of Romanization. Some goddesses and gods from northern ırope made an impact more broadly in the civilian areas of the south and st, and perhaps the most important of these was that represented by the gurines known to scholars as ‘pseudo-Venuses’. They were small statuettes a pretty nude woman, standing coquettishly like the Roman goddess of xual love, Venus, and her Greek counterpart Aphrodite. They were mass-oduced in Gaul, apparently for purchase by individuals, and are found in itain in houses, shrines and graves.[22] Their nature and purpose are ıknown: it could be, for example, that they were images of a Gaulish love ɔddess, or even of Venus herself, and believed to confer success in romance sex; or aids to rites of religion or magic intended to assist with ecifically female medical problems. The god from northern Europe who is st recorded in the civilian zone was Toutatis, whose name seems to mean rotector of the people’ and whose cult was found all along the Danube and ıine frontier. His name is found in Britain on two plaques and a potsherd, ɔm Hertfordshire, Hadrian’s Wall and Essex, but above all on rings, upon hich he was recorded more than any other deity in the province. Sixty-ght have been found so far, all produced in British workshops and almost l from the East Midlands, above all Lincolnshire.[23]

67 A typical icon of the enigmatic Matres, or Mothers, shown in characteristic bountiful mode
ıted with trays of what look like loaves of bread upon their laps. This one was found at Cirencester
l is now in the Corinium Museum there.

68 In contrast to the ‘classical’ image of the Matres at Cirencester (left), this one, from the ecinct of Sulis Minerva, at Bath, seems to show the same sort of goddesses in a much cruder form ıre native to north-western Europe. It is now in the Roman Baths Museum.

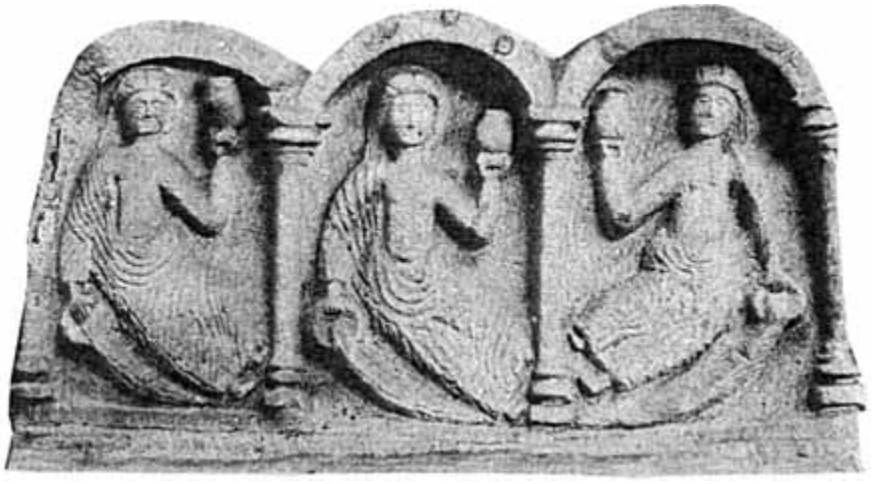
69 These are the mysterious *Genii cucullati*, or ‘hooded spirits’, who, despite their sombre garb l expressions, seem always to have a benevolent and protective nature. On this relief from glingworth, in the Cotswolds, now in the Corinium Museum, they seem to be carrying swords and ırding one of the Matres.

In contrast, it is notable that not all of the favourite divinities of the ɔrthern Roman provinces achieved a significant presence in Britain. elenus, the chief god of Noricum, the region which essentially became odern Austria, was popular westwards as far as Gaul but represented in itain only by one engraving on a tile.[24] Sucellus, ‘the Good Striker’, a uch-loved Gaulish god whose symbols were a hammer and a barrel, is entioned on a single ring found at York.[25] Another major god of the Gauls as one depicted seated with his legs crossed under his body, large stag’s

tlers, one or more of the heavy twisted neck ornaments called torques, and
ıeavy sack or purse (though not all these features appeared in every one of
s images). He strongly moved the imagination of nineteenth-century
ench scholars, who gave him the name ‘Cernunnos’, probably meaning
ıe Horned One’, from a relief found underneath the cathedral of Notre-
ame at Paris.[26] Some doubts have been expressed about this identification,
ı the grounds that the Paris relief shows a figure with short horns unlike the
reading antlers of the cross-legged god (and may have, indeed, lacked the
ossed legs, as he is shown only from the chest up). Nor is the name itself
rtain, as the slab is broken on one side, and it will never be known if there
as a letter ‘C’ at the beginning.[27] None the less, a widespread impression
his importance – by that name – pervaded the English-speaking world,
rgely because of Margaret Murray, in the 1930s, who made him the best
ıown of the horned (or antlered) gods of north-western Europe to modern
ople.[28] In Britain the cross-legged, antlered god is represented only by a
ıgle, possible, relief, from Cirencester. It is in the right area – the
otswolds – for a Gaulish deity, and has some of the characteristics of the
ıe (rightly or wrongly) called Cernunnos, but the identification is not
rtain, not least because the relief is very worn.[29] Britain also almost lacked
ɔona, a divine patroness of horses from Gaul who achieved great
ɔpularity in the Western Empire, especially among cavalry regiments:
scriptions to and images of her are found as far south as Africa and as far
st as Hungary.[30] Only two dedications are recorded to her in Britain,
ɔwever, both from northern forts, plus two probable and two possible
ıages of her from the southern half of the province.[31]

70 To judge by her usual trappings, of axe and tub, and her association with her Roman consort ercury, this is the Continental goddess Rosmerta, transplanted to the Roman colony of Gloucester, ere this relief is now in the city museum.

71 Another divine Continental enigma who achieved popularity in Roman Britain: one of the
y ‘Venus’ figurines mass-produced in Gaul. This one was found in the Walbrook at London and is
w in the Museum of London.



72 This relief was discovered at the shrine of Coventina at Carrawburgh on Hadrian’s Wall, and
y portray three different aspects of the goddess herself, or the goddess flanked by attendant

mphs, or three nymphs who were honoured as separate divinities within Coventina's complex. It is w in the museum at Chesters fort, in the care of English Heritage.

One of the most interesting aspects of Romano-British religion is that wcomers from the rest of the empire commonly honoured many of the tive deities of the British and encouraged the natives themselves to ntinue to do so. The arrival of the Roman custom of regularly making ages of divine beings in stone and metal, and written dedications to them the same durable materials, effectively reveals these Iron Age goddesses d gods to history. Graham Webster has drawn attention to a sequence of em, spaced out along the Hadrian's Wall zone. The god who represented e River Tyne was honoured where the frontier highway crossed it at odern Chesters, as a reclining, mature, bearded male with flowing robes. ne goddess Coventina was the centre of another aquatic cult at the fort at arrawburgh, where a clutch of springs sacred to her received intense votion from all ranks among the soldiers stationed there. A probable icon her from the site shows her reclining in stately classical fashion, with a nilar robe to that of the river god. The Irthing Valley to the west was the rritory of the god Cocidius, whom the army along that stretch of the wall entified with Mars and Silvanus, the Roman gods of war and wild nature spectively. He is portrayed as a stout figure in armour and bearing arms. ill further west in Cumbria was Belatucadrus. His name means 'the bright autiful one' in the native Brythonic language, though the probable ctorial representations of him (admittedly not absolutely certain) show a udely depicted naked horned being with a huge nose and penis, carrying ear and shield: dedications to him suggest that he attracted a following om a lower social class than Cocidius. At the fort of Benwell, on the stern stretch of Hadrian's Wall, was the only known shrine to ntenociticus, another horned god, but with gentler features; and one lopted by high-ranking officers.[32] The pattern seems to be one of intense calism, with deities of different sex and personality being associated with rritories which could be a score of miles wide or confined to a single site. ne military men stationed across it perhaps adopted the worship of the vinities whom they encountered there from a mixture of personal liking for em as characters and a belief that they would afford good protection and vour in the terrain over which they presided.

73 Given the appearance of a bird in armour by crude craftsmanship, this is in fact the warrior
d Cocidius, from the Irthing Valley of the Hadrian's Wall zone, as portrayed on a silver plaque
ınd at the Bewcastle fort. It is now in the Carlisle Museum.

Surveying the evidence for native British deities, as revealed on
›mano-British sites, it is possible to make a case, that goddesses tend to be
sociated more with the natural world and gods with human activities and
nctions. Certainly female divinities seem to be more closely linked to
ater: Coventina has been mentioned, while Sulis was honoured as the
dwelling spirit of the hot spring at Bath; Verbeia of the River Wharfe;
elisima of another Pennine river, the Ribble; while the medicinal wells at
ıxton in the Peak District were Aquae Arnemetiae, 'the waters of the
›ddess of the sacred precinct'.[33] However, there were also water gods, such
that of the Tyne, and Condatis, who presided over a meeting of rivers in
hat is now County Durham, and others connected to natural places, such as
gonemetis who was associated with a patch of land in what became
ncolnshire.[34] Furthermore, the evidence itself is too patchy to allow of any

rtainty. Most of the deities revealed by Roman-British inscriptions are erely names, and most of the pictorial representations of them are onymous. The identities and roles of the individual goddesses portrayed ith a palm branch at Caerwent, or with apples at Cirencester, or with a horn plenty at Gloucester, or with a spear at Lemington in the Cotswold Hills choose just four examples from one region, around the lower Severn sin), are equally mysterious.[35]

Understanding the functions of native divinities is usually very difficult, en when there is plenty of evidence. It has often been presumed, for ample, that Sulis was a patron of healing, because her spring at Bath was equented in later historic times by people seeking cures from its mineral- ch waters. This may well have been the case, but there is actually no firm idence of it in the many finds from the site. All testify, instead, to her sociation with a much fiercer nature, such as the many lead tablets which ll on her to curse enemies, and the miniature replica of a war catapult und with them in her spring. It may be that she was thought to personify e fiery spirit which heated up the water, and so was considered an propriate deity for war or vengeance (which would itself make the parent absence of military goddesses more doubtful). The Romans sociated her with their own Minerva, goddess of both war and handicrafts. milar problems attend horned gods, of whom the British seem to have en fond. They are recorded especially well on the northern frontier, where ree have already been noted, and the incoming soldiers seem to have found ch aggressive figures attractive; but they are also found across the centre d south of the province. The horns that they wore were those of bull, ram, at or (much more rarely) stag. The Greeks and Romans also had horned ds, such as Pan and Faunus, but these were deities of the remote untryside, much less prominent in worship than other forms of divinity. hat is less easy to conclude is what the horns signified. They could be mply symbols of strength and power; or of wild nature; or of a pastoral onomy based on herds and flocks. In some of the cruder or more eathered images, they could indeed be intended to represent helmets or ings, so that a number might even be icons of the Roman wing-headed god ercury.[36]

Apparent native war gods such as Belatucadrus and Cocidius were ɔnoured in Roman Britain apparently without difficulty, although they had esumably once been invoked against Rome. War goddesses seem harder to ıd among the British, though Sulis may have been one, and so may :igantia who will be discussed below: certainly they were prominent in any ancient European and Near Eastern religions. The one most famed in ıditional histories of Britain is also the most problematic: Andate or ndraste, the favourite deity of Boudica, queen of the Iceni tribe of East nglia, who launched the greatest rebellion against Roman rule in the and. This goddess features (under both names) in a history written by an istocrat living in southern Italy called Dio Cassius, a century and a half ter Boudica's time; or rather, in a summary of that history made at least ven centuries later still. This text stated that the goddess's name meant 'ictory', and that captured Roman women were sacrificed to her, with rbarous tortures, in her sacred grove.[37] None of these details is found in e account of the rebellion by Tacitus, writing a hundred years closer to the ent (but still a generation later), and there is no way of knowing how liable Dio Cassius's source of information was, or indeed what it was. hen the surviving versions of his history can be checked against earlier xts, the distortions in his version are very apparent: a comparison of his count of Julius Caesar's Gallic War with Caesar's original one is a case in ɔint. The historical status of this goddess therefore remains unconfirmed, d the two contexts in which the references to her appear in the history – in eported speech which no Roman could have heard, and an atrocity story – e among those in which truth was most likely to be embroidered or evaded ancient writers.

One means of assimilating native and Roman religion, which has tracted much attention from scholars in recent years, was to produce brid deities, in which a native one was identified with a Roman one with uivalent characteristics. Cocidius has already been cited here as an ample of this practice. The most popular Roman divinity in the pairings as Mars, who functioned in Roman mythology as a general protective gure associated with war, farming and government. The Roman god of aling, music and the arts, Apollo, was coupled in the northern forts with aponus, who was presumably another such deity of skills. The woodland

d hunting god Silvanus was linked to three British or Gaulish gods, and ercury, patron of commerce, travel and education, with one. This was a cidedly British patterning, for in Gaul, where the same tactic was adopted, ercury was by far the most popular Roman divinity for identification with cal gods. As he was also found quite widely in Britain by himself – and as made the consort of the goddess identified as Rosmerta – this may nply mean that the Britons had fewer divinities of Mercury's kind than the auls. The tactic was much rarer in the case of goddesses, but Minerva, oman patroness of war and handicrafts, was twinned prominently with ulis at the great temple complex built around the hot spring at Bath; her dications furnish eight of the eleven known cases of a linkage of a native ith a Roman female deity. As Jane Webster and Amy Zoll have nphasized, this sort of pairing was a relatively rare exercise, representing st 8 per cent of the more than 900 references to deities from the province corded by the mid 1990s. On the other hand, it was found in a quarter of ose from its southern half, and, to play the game of statistics from a fferent starting point, 65 of the 246 deities with names in Celtic languages corded in Roman Britain were paired with a Mediterranean deity (26 per nt). Twelve more were portrayed beside such a deity, in a visual if not a ritten linkage. Jane Webster has suggested that the pairing of deities may ve been an imposition by Rome, and thus a demonstration of its power, ther than a dialogue between native and newcomer. Amy Zoll has drawn tention instead to the lack of any evidence for official or social pressure to atch divine beings in this way, and of much for the fact that the process as a matter of choice for individuals and small groups.[38] We have in fact reliable evidence of how this occurred, or the reasons for it.

A final complication in the exercise of determining what the treatment of ities can tell us about Romanization is that of knowing which divine gures actually were native to Britain. Along the whole northern frontier of e Roman world, the wheel was the symbol of the sky, representing either e sun in particular, or the whole circle of the heavens. When associated ith a god in this huge zone, from Britain to the Danube Valley, it indicates ry firmly that the deity concerned is a celestial one; and indeed at two ilitary installations in the Hadrian's Wall complex, and one site in the otswolds, it is found with images of divine males. The problem is that in

› case is the god concerned named. Conversely, at two places in East ŋglia, the wheel motif was found on metalwork associated with a cult of e Roman sky god Jupiter.[39] In the other cases, therefore, we may be oking at good evidence for a native British equivalent, or for one or more ıported from other northern provinces of Rome, or simply at a linkage of e northern European symbol of the sky with Jupiter himself, who would en be the god represented in every case. Similarly, the direct association of ɔventina with the springs at Carrawburgh would seem to suggest a cult ıncentrated on that single natural feature; but dedications have now been und to her at Narbonne in southern France, and in north-west Spain, while l her worshippers in Britain who identified themselves on dedications me from Germany or the Netherlands.[40] Either she was a Continental ity who came to be transplanted to the Cheviot Hills, or else her worship as taken over from Britain to the European mainland. Likewise, more scriptions survive to Maponus in Britain than on the Continent, but in the rmer they all derive from the northern military zone, and most are the ɔrk of high-ranking officers, while in the latter they were dedicated by vilians. His cult may therefore have been imported to Britain.[41] Under ɔman rule a goddess called Brigantia was venerated in the northern part of e British province, as patroness of the dominant tribe there, the Brigantes. ıe may indeed have been its main deity before the Romans arrived, but it is so possible that Rome itself created the cult of Brigantia, as a rsonification of the new unit of local government that it imposed upon the be.[42] Even the origin of Sulis, the goddess of the hot spring at Bath who as twinned with Minerva, has now been cast into doubt; Guy de la édoyère, noting the lack of conclusive evidence for a prehistoric cult at the ring, has suggested that she might have been first recognized and named the Romans themselves.[43]

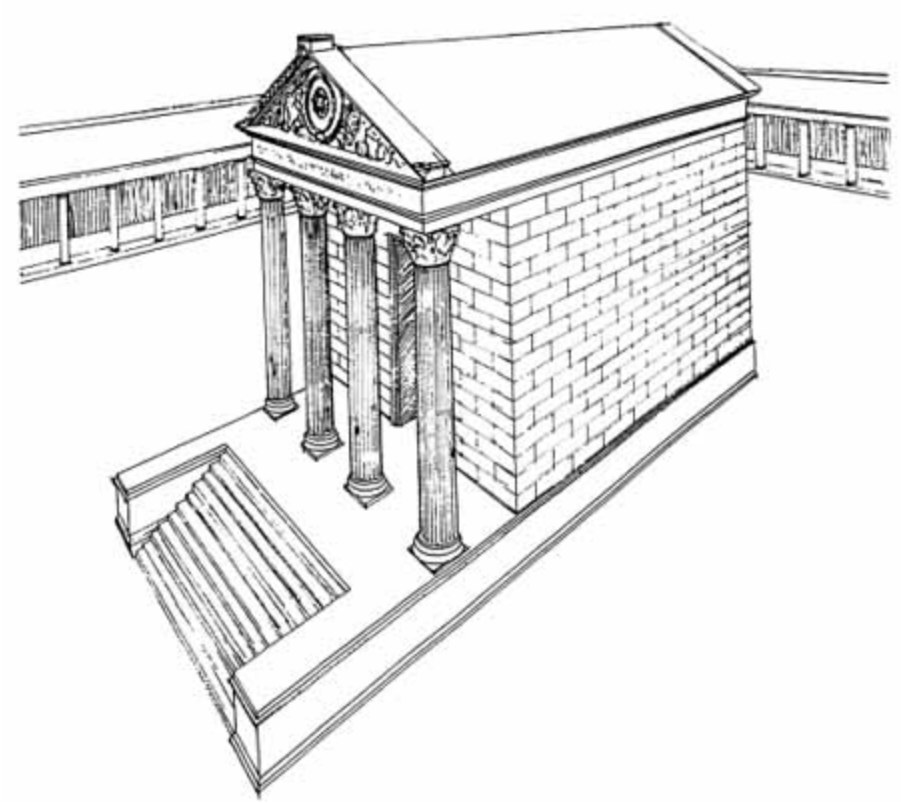
It must now be fairly clear that there is ample evidence for the ıportation of deities from elsewhere in the Roman Empire into Britain: ove all those from the nearest provinces, of Gaul and Germany, but also ɔm Rome itself and, to a lesser extent, the eastern parts of the Roman ɔrld. There is equal proof that native deities continued to be honoured ıder Roman rule, in large numbers, and that quite frequently these were entified with Roman divinities in an act of cultural syncretism. What

nnot be decided, from this data, is how far the cults of imported goddesses d gods remained confined to worshippers who had arrived with them from tside Britain; how far the movement to ‘twin’ deities was encouraged or posed as a manifestation of imperial rule; and what a relationship with ost of the divine beings recorded in the province meant to most of those ho engaged in it. Too often the inscriptions now preserved in museums or corded by early antiquarians feature mere names, with no sense of context function; while the images of deities that have survived to the present, ost of them mutilated or broken, or with features dissolved by weathering, e usually even more enigmatic. Just as in the case of the pre-Roman ligion of the island, we have a framework which sets out the main outlines a system of belief and behaviour, but must rely on speculation to fill in e many gaps.

Sacred Places and People

There is a reasonable degree of certainty regarding the physical form of least the most impressive and public settings for Roman-British worship, r between 140 and 150 temples belonging to the period have been entified. They were built in various styles, of which the classical editerranean one, of a large rectangular stone box fronted by a triangular diment and bordered by columns, was the rarest. The only known example Britain is the temple to the deified emperor Claudius at Colchester, the atform of which still supports the medieval castle; although various urban ly places had classical façades, with columns and a pediment. The most mmon style, used in about 45 per cent of known temples in Britain, was und across the north-western provinces of the empire and consisted of an ner stone precinct built inside an outer one of the same shape. The shape elf took various forms, of which rectangular and polygonal were the most mmon. It was a mode of architecture which gave good protection from the eather, and so was well suited to a more northerly climate than that of reece or Rome, but it also continued the Iron Age tradition of sacred closures, found in the same region. Another form of continuity is that herever a native shrine is known to have been still in use when the Romans nded in Britain, worship was kept up there after the conquest and generally e structure was rebuilt in stone. Most of the temples in the province were nall, having comfortable space for no more than a dozen people: this

ɔuld fit the pattern of seeing them as houses for deities in which one or a w worshippers might pray with the main rites taking place outside.[44]



74 A conjectural restoration of the temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, based on the classical Greek l Roman design but lacking the border of columns all about the building: those are reserved for the nt, to give it a perfect façade in the Mediterranean style.

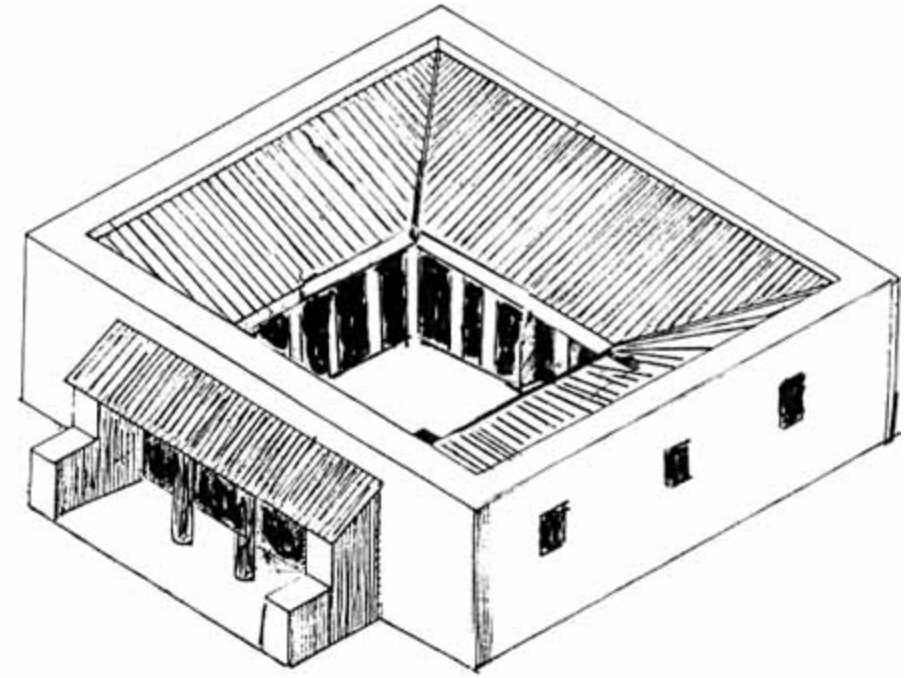
They were initially found as commonly in both urban and rural settings: e main town built to serve the eastern sector of Hadrian's Wall, and now lled Corbridge, had a whole street of them.[45] During the third and fourth nturies, however, the construction of temples in towns and cities virtually ased, and what seem to have been rural pilgrimage temples were nstructed in large numbers across southern Britain, especially in the West ɔuntry. Often these were in striking natural positions, and seem to have en established to welcome worshippers from outside their immediate cinity. Some were near roads, while others were deep in remote untryside. Their appearance was one aspect of that boom in the economy the Romano-British countryside in the period, of which the multiplication villas and market towns was another. They appear to have been

nstructed by the owners of the land on which they stood, presumably opelled by a mixture – in varying personal degrees – of piety, a desire for estige, and a wish to profit financially from the pilgrim traffic which they eated. Although some appear to have been dedicated to a dominant ddess or god, a range of other deities was usually honoured at them as ell. A sample of three such sites, chosen from a fifty-mile span of the West England, may serve to typify their kind.

The first was in a valley of the limestone Cotswold Hills, which holds tural springs and lies in what is now north-west Wiltshire near the village Nettleton Shrub. The presiding deity was a local one called Cunomaglus over of dogs'), who may – given his canine associations – have been a tron of hunting and was identified by the Romans with their god Apollo. lso honoured there were Apollo's sister Diana, another dog-lover and a ntress, and the god of woodlands, Silvanus, who was likewise a favourite hunters; but also Mercury and Rosmerta. The temple itself was one of a mplex of buildings, of which others may have been a dormitory and a eatre.[46] The site is now just an open field. Another such field of red otswold earth lies on the western fringe of the hills, where their steep carpment plunges to the Severn Valley above the village of Uley. An Iron ge shrine once stood there, where miniature spears were dedicated, perhaps a local war god, and which was refashioned into a stone temple under oman rule. Spears were also placed in that new building, but by the fourth ntury the main deity, who had a handsome cult statue, was not a military ıe but Mercury. Goats and cocks were offered to him, as his special imals, and also coins and rings, perhaps as suitable gifts to a god who cluded commerce among the activities for which he had a special care. nother of those activities was crime, and this may have combined with the erce reputation of the original, native, divinity to make the Mercury of ley a particular patron of devotees who wanted to curse those who had jured them: above all, thieves. He also seemingly gave shelter to a range of llow deities, including Mars, Silvanus, Sol (the sun god), Jupiter, probably acchus, and a being who was either Cupid or Victory. Once more the mple stood at the centre of a set of buildings, which may have included a ostel and a shop (for the purchase of votive offerings).[47]

The third site lies on a spur of high ground on the edge of the Forest of ean, above the village of Lydney on the opposite side of the Severn to ley. It was excavated at different points in the nineteenth century, and ain in the 1920s by the celebrated husband and wife team of Mortimer ter Sir Mortimer) and Tessa Wheeler. They left the ruins laid out for blic instruction and enjoyment, which is still possible in a short period ch year by permission of the landowner who maintains the lovely park ound the hill and the museum which contains the finds. The Wheelers terpreted the temple as a cult centre of a British healing god called odens, whom the Romans twinned with Mars: he is otherwise known only om two statuettes found in Lancashire (and now lost).[48] Some of the rrounding structures were identified as a set of baths and a guest house, hile the temple had a system of cubicles which were thought, on the basis a Greek parallel, to have been places where devotees could seek divine essages which came in the form of dreams as they slept. Fifteen statuettes carvings of dogs were found in the precinct, which the Wheelers (using reek and Italian examples) suggested might have been kept there to lick the flicted parts of sick pilgrims, and so heal them.[49] All this remains possible, t also speculative. The cubicles may not have been used for dreams, but r private worship, or as shrines for different deities, or for insulation; or ey may even have been a Christian addition to the structure after pagan orship ended there. The evidence for the site as a healing shrine consists of miniature arm, a bone figurine of a woman with hands on waist, and an e doctor's stamp. The arm matches the models of body parts dedicated at ch establishments on the Continent by those healed in them, and the gurine is of a sort left at these places by women cured of their ailments. he arm also, however, may have held an apple, and so have been part of a tuette of Venus, while the figurine could have nothing to do with edicine and the eye doctor could simply have been looking for trade. odens was (as said) identified with Mars, whom the Romans did not regard a healer, and none of the votive messages to him at Lydney mention aling: the single one which specifies a service asks him to curse a thief. is identification as the main deity at Lydney may itself be an accident sulting from the greater survival of inscriptions to him there: a bronze lief of a sun god and a stone statuette of a goddess holding a horn of plenty

ere also found on the site. The dogs may have been general figures of otection, or guidance, rather than associated with the curative properties corded to them at a few places in the Mediterranean.



75 A conjectural restoration of the temple of Mercury at Uley in Gloucestershire which conforms the more native form of Romano-British sacred architecture.

76 The foundations of the temple at Lydney, as preserved for visitors at the present day.

77 A drawing of the finest of the images of dogs found at the Lydney temple, a magnificent ɔnze deerhound, now exhibited in the museum at Lydney Park.

Despite their more recent date, and sophisticated construction, the mples of Roman Britain are more badly ruined than many of the island's ehistoric sites, consisting – where anything now appears above the ground all – of foundations of brick and stone. This means that the original ıysical experience of them is lost, let alone that of the rites conducted in or ıtside them. We have little sense of their height, inside or outside; of hether they were shadowy places or filled with natural or artificial light; d of what their roofs looked like. Indeed, there is no certainty in some ses whether we should be imagining a large, completely roofed building, a cloister around a central open space. It is probable that they were uipped with lamps or torches, draperies, paintings, cut flowers and flecting surfaces (a pool for water was laid in the Uley temple), but this mains supposition. We do not know how well heated they were, or hether music, dance, singing, chanting and the sharing of drinks went on side. There are hints of rites by which visitors were received on arrival. At ath, the sacred spring was enclosed in the second century to create a adowy and private space, approached along a narrow passage which ɔuld have given access to worshippers only singly or in pairs. Brean Down now a steep limestone peninsula jutting out into the Severn Estuary in ɔmerset, but in Roman times the marshes on its landward side would have fectively turned it into an island. Pilgrims to the square fourth-century mple built on its crest, where stag antlers were kept as cult objects, would obably have had to be rowed across to it, before commencing the steep

imb to its precinct.[50] We do not know if these places were wrapped in verent silence, or if their environs were surrounded by a hubbub of stalls lling refreshments, sacrificial animals and incense, and votive objects.

We are also unsure of the nature of the staff who carried out the rites at omano-British temples and maintained them from day to day, or of how ese people were supported. Haruspices, or professional diviners, are corded at Bath, where they would have served the considerable pilgrim affic to the sacred spring, and the name of a priest is also recorded there. herwise, priests are only named at two sites on Hadrian's Wall, with a aster of ceremonies' cited in an inscription at Greetland in a West orkshire dale. A fine relief carved on a slab on the temporary, second-ntury frontier in central Scotland shows a priest clad in the classic Roman stume of a toga, pouring a libation over an altar while a pig, sheep and ll are being led towards it by an assistant.[51] Ceremonial trappings have en found at Lydney, Bath and places in Surrey, rural East Anglia and the ast Midlands, which have been identified as the garb of religious officials: ey consist of spiked or arched metal crowns, silver-plated diadems, addresses with bronze chains suspended from them, metal masks, eptres, ornamented staves, and rattles (used elsewhere in the empire to own out distracting noises). The supposition that they were religious stumes and accessories is credible, and indeed likely, but none has so far en found in a context which firmly proves their use. In addition, the mple precincts have been found to contain axes and knives (presumably r animal sacrifice); flagons and bowls (presumably for cleansing and ation); spoons and plates (presumably for ritual feasts); metal burners resumably for incense); and metal standards (apparently for display in ual). All these attributions are logical, and may be correct, but any of them ay embody a basic misunderstanding of the function of the object ncerned.[52]

78 Metal crown, found at Hockwold cum Wilton where the Norfolk Breckland meets the Fens, l often presumed to have been worn by a priest.

Just as the sites of Iron Age shrines were perpetuated as holy places, so lts located at special points of the natural landscape continued. There was general rupture in the custom of venerating particular pieces of water, as e Romans themselves, and many peoples of their empire, fully shared the ncept of sacred springs, lakes and pools. In certain areas the deposition of jects in wetlands did decline, the classic case being Wales where almost ne of the pools and lakes in which deposits were made during the Iron ge seems to have continued to receive such attention: the main exception is yn Cerrig Bach.[53] Elsewhere, some waters marked out for attention in ehistory continued to be honoured. The Thames, beside the newly founded man city of London, was given metal figurines of animals, birds and ities, and thousands of coins. The Walbrook stream, which flowed into it xt to the city, received more coins, ornaments and tools. Nothing had anged, except that the nature of the deposits now reflected civilian life stead of a warrior aristocracy.[54] Moreover, vigorous new aquatic cults veloped under Roman rule. The reverence paid to the spring at Bath, and

ose of Coventina at Carrawburgh, and the goddess at Buxton, and to the ities of the Tyne and Wharfe, has already been mentioned. At ercebridge, where a major Roman road crossed the River Tees, divers have w recovered about two thousand objects dropped into the water. They an the period of Roman rule, with a peak in the middle, and include coins, gs, brooches, and images of various deities, especially the staple Roman ds Jupiter, Mars and Mercury.[55]

The deposition of objects in pits dug into the ground also continued. uman bones became rare among them (though not, as shall be seen, wholly known), but the other kinds of material persisted. In the precinct of the mple built on Jordan Hill, above what is now the Dorset port of eymouth, a chest of crude stones was placed at the bottom of either a shaft a dried-out well, with two pots, a short sword, a spearhead, a knife, two eces of iron and a steelyard. The shaft was then filled with seventeen ccessive layers of ash and charcoal, and of tiles, the latter containing the dies of ravens, crows, buzzards and starlings, each accompanied by a in. Just as in the Iron Age, these scavenging and carrion-eating birds, sociated with death and war but also daily cleaners at human settlements, tained symbolic potency.[56] At Ashill on the clay plateau of central rfolk, two shafts and a pit were dug into the interior of two circles of tches. In the lower part of the deeper shaft were placed a hundred pots, most half of them broken but the rest whole, embedded in hazel leaves and ts. With them were a boar's tusk, pieces of antler, a whetstone, bronze asps, fragments of wall plaster and of a wooden basket, broken sandals, arcoal, stones and a knife blade. The shallower received more pots, an ox ull and red deer antlers, and the pit a goat's skull and other animal nes.[57] They would perhaps be written off as rubbish pits were it not for e sacrifice of so much fine and intact pottery. Most of this assemblage ould have been familiar from ritual depositions made at any time since the ginning of the Neolithic, and some of it from even earlier.

Rites

Only one description has survived of an actual ritual in Roman Britain, at least one among the native British, and it may be a complete invention. is the famous passage in the work of the naturalist Pliny, who wrote in the

ter first century, which asserts that ‘at certain sacred rites’ the wives and ughters-in-law of the Britons ‘march along naked’, having stained the hole of their bodies almost black with dye from the woad plant.[58] Pliny esented this as an example (among many in his work) of the folly of emote tribes’, and there is absolutely no means of knowing how reliable s information was. He never went near Britain himself, and as he rupulously provided source references for material which he took from rlier texts, this was clearly a piece of news that he had picked up, from a rson or persons unknown. It may be a valuable piece of anthropological formation, or a salacious myth concocted to mock the British at a time hen the province established among them was undergoing a fresh period of pansion.

This being so, the only solid evidence for ritual behaviour in that ovince is provided by archaeology, and consists of special deposits of the rt made all through prehistory, and susceptible to much the same range of ssible interpretations. As indicated above, these were made in familiar nds of location, and often indeed at the same places as earlier. Coventina’s rings received around 1,600 coins, thirteen altars, jewellery, figurines, pins d a human skull. The altars may have been thrown in to destroy or commission the shrine at the end of its use, but the other items all seem to ve been deposited as a part of regular worship. Those of fragile material ere lowered in carefully, though whether this was to ensure that they ssed to the goddess intact, or whether to immerse them in this way was lieved to drown their indwelling spirit and so make them the equivalent of ood sacrifices, is unknown. Nor is it clear what the point of such devotion as, for the water of the springs has no medicinal properties, and none of the ferings was attended by inscriptions declaring their purpose. It is not really own what sort of goddess Coventina was, and all that can be securely tested is her association with water and the popularity of her cult at arrawburgh. All that is visible there now is a bog overgrown with cotton ass and other moorland vegetation, through which the wind courses.[59] Not uch more can be said about the nature of other Romano-British water ities. The case of Sulis Minerva has been considered, while at ercebridge it has been noted that a sixth of the coins thrown into the River es featured imperial women. This could indicate that the ruling spirit of

at water was a goddess, or that an unusual number of the devotees there ere women, but nothing is certain.[60]

The appearance of towns under Roman rule, and an associated growth of pulation and intensification of farming, led to a much greater digging of ells, thus providing new linkages of water and ritual. The latter was rticularly evident at the construction of a well and at its termination, when was filled in or covered over, and abandoned. In general, pottery was posited in the former stage, and pottery and animals during the second. here were clear sanitary reasons why animal matter was not put into a well fore or while it was used, but the choice of beast is significant, as dogs ere especially favoured, and above all in pairs: a well at Staines in the rrey part of the Thames Valley had no fewer than eight couples. Offerings wells at their termination could be both varied and extensive. When one as filled in at the great coastal fortress at Portchester, which dominated hat would be Portsmouth Harbour in the fourth century, the soil put into it ntained another pair of dogs, but also three sheep's skulls, thirteen of oxen d a Great Northern Diver, a kind of large wild bird associated with ater.[61]

Much the same kind of deposits as those put into watery places were aced in pits dug into the ground, of the sort noted at Jordan's Hill and shill, the two cases mentioned above.[62] Once more, pots, dogs and coins edominate; and it is possible that the pottery, whether interred whole or ashed, contained offerings of food or drink.[63] As these two cases indicate, wever, the pits with apparent ritual deposition vary greatly in location and ntents, most having their own idiomatic character. Animal remains buried temples contained fewer dogs and horses than at Iron Age shrines and ore sheep and goats than seem to have been the rule in the actual economy the province, though cattle and pigs were also represented. The animals ere generally butchered for feasts, presumably after sacrifice at festivals, d most seem to have been killed in early summer and late autumn, the nes when young and mature animals tended to be slaughtered, spectively. Some holy places showed remains of large-scale sacrificial tivity, such as Uley, while others, such as Bath and Lydney, had little.[64] e pits next to a temple at Great Chesterford, a market town on the chalk

lls of what is now the north-western corner of Essex, had repeated position of ironwork and animal remains, above all newly hatched chicks d the right sides of lambs. Young animals, therefore, were chosen for crifice there, and delicate pieces of gold and silver, which may be termed eaves', were also buried, presumably by worshippers.[65] Once more, local tterns were individual and idiosyncratic.

Towns also had such pits, of more or less the same kind as in the untryside, and a particular study of them in an urban context has been ade by Michael Fulford, the most recent excavator of the city of Silchester Hampshire, the site of which was never subsequently built over and can erefore be intensively examined. Once more animal remains, pottery, etalwork and coins were the favourite kinds of deposit (and pots and dogs ost common of all), but the forty pits and shafts which contained them ried in size and richness of material, so that some were apparently created large and communal rites and others by small, private, equivalents. They an in date the whole of the life of the city, but naturally enough are most undant during the peak period of its population and economic vitality.[66] llas were another site for such apparent offerings, and indeed the boundary tween these kinds of building and temples is a hazy one, as it has been gued that some, such as at Lullingstone in the Darent Valley of Kent and nedworth in the heart of the Cotswolds, may either have been designed imarily as shrines or converted to them.[67] The usual pit deposits are found them, but again with distinctive individual variants: one at Lullingstone ntained a lamb's head, lots of pottery, thirty-four leather sandals and a mplete sucking pig.[68] Boundary ditches were ready-made receptacles for ch material, and those that ran outside the city wall at London and along e roads leading in and out of the city itself received clusters of it, mostly ts and animal bones (above all of dogs) as usual. The thresholds and walls buildings were also favourite locations, and here, as in the case of wells d all the kinds of site listed above, these depositions were especially mmon at the beginning or end of a structure's working life. Some such es survived to modern times: in the twentieth century, and perhaps even w, shipwrights still put coins into the mast steps of new boats, following a idespread Roman custom.[69]

Despite all this richness of evidence, for the Romano-British period as r the preceding one, it remains true that one archaeologist's ritual deposit another's rubbish pit. Guy de la Bédoyère has sounded the alarm in this se, pointing out that it is impossible to distinguish dogs deposited as ferings from those simply affectionately buried; and rites of consecration d termination from a straightforward disposal of garbage. 'Structured posits', to him, could merely indicate an organization of waste material fore it was buried: he notes that rubbish dumps of some sort had to be an trinsic part of every settlement, and burial represented the most sanitary d easy method of getting rid of the refuse. Pits containing objects could so be hiding places for goods. De la Bédoyère therefore concluded that pit posits did not provide evidence from which ritual activity in Roman itain could be safely reconstructed.[70] Certainly the spectrum that runs om an undoubted landfill of waste at one end to apparently unequivocal idence for ceremony at the other is a frighteningly complex one. In the omano-British town of Godmanchester, next to the later county town of untingdon, pits were dug which were interpreted as straightforward bbish dumps, yet at the foot of each at least two dogs were always terred, perhaps as guardians or offerings.[71] Here the opposite ends of the ectrum form a single unit.

One category of deposit in earth has attracted particular attention of late the case of Roman Britain: the hoard of buried valuables. As seen, this as a feature of British behaviour from the Late Bronze Age onwards, and it tained or resumed its importance under Roman rule. Traditionally the oards of fine metalwork and jewellery from the Roman province were garded as caches of personal valuables, buried for safe keeping in difficult nes and never retrieved by the unfortunate owners (or thieves). From the 90s it became increasingly common for experts to raise the possibility that ese had been interred as offerings to spirits or deities. This suggestion flected an ever growing body of evidence, consequent on the invention of e metal detector, and one of the strongest arguments in favour of it was at the dates at which the treasures concerned were buried were usually too rly – from the second to the early fourth centuries – to match times of civil ar or raiding in the province that could induce such precautions. More oman coin hoards have been found in Britain than in any other part of the

ıpire – well over two thousand to date – and almost six hundred consist of ;ues minted in the late third century, when the province was a haven of ·ace and security. The largest ever found, at Mildenhall, where the Suffolk ·athland meets the Fens, had 54,992 coins, of which the latest was minted the year 273. The second largest hoard was detected near Frome, in the ıst Somerset farmland, in 2010, with 52,503 specimens of which the most cent dated from 293. By the time of its discovery the concept of such ·posits as sacrifices – the Frome treasure would have represented about ur years' worth of pay to a common Roman soldier – was becoming ıramount.[72] None the less, it was not universally accepted, even those who ıphasized it agreeing that some hoards might indeed have been personal fe-deposits, especially those from near the fall of the empire. Some holars pointed out that buried collections of Romano-British valuables are pecially common in East Anglia, one of the parts of the province most ılnerable to raiding and invasion.[73] Then in 2012 the whole dating system as thrown into confusion, as another pot full of third-century coins was ported from Bredon Hill, which rises from the Severn Valley in orcestershire. What made this one different was that the context proved at it could not have been buried before the late fourth century, meaning at these collections of currency minted in tranquil and secure times may ve been put into the ground in much more perilous circumstances a ntury later.[74] What this realization does for the theory of ritual deposition yet to be seen.

The material placed in water and earth spans the spheres of communal d personal religious behaviour. The two are often difficult to disentangle, ıt at times it is possible to identify the relics of an act as belonging firmly the latter sphere. At Wasperton, for example, beside the River Avon in ntral Warwickshire, a sandstone block was uncovered in 1983. Somebody d carved the word *Feliciter* (For luck) upon one side, and placed the stone ith the carved part facing down. Then a fire had been lit on the upper one, ithin red deer antlers set in a square, before the stone, antlers and ashes ere buried.[75] They are clearly remnants of a rite designed to bring personal od fortune, perhaps from underworld beings, but how, or why, or by hom, can never be known. Other forms of personal religion are embodied portable objects, such as rings, amulets, bracelets, gems and pots, or

›use decorations such as mosaics. These are inscribed with the names of a ɾge number of deities, all from outside Britain. Some are from Rome itself, ch as Minerva, Bacchus, Hercules, Fortuna, Ceres, and the Dea Panthea (a ȝure developed under the empire who represented all goddesses), while hers, such as Zeus of Heliopolis, Serapis, Isis and Zeus Ammon, came ɔm the eastern provinces; above all, Egypt. The only possibly British ȝure to feature in such private settings is Brigantia, who, as mentioned, ight have been a Roman creation; though a number of anonymous images goddesses and gods in such contexts may conceal others. A lot of the wellery may have been brought into Britain by people arriving from the editerranean basin, who wanted their familiar divine patrons with them; d much of the rest, and the pottery, may have been inscribed by them once ey were in Britain. The mosaics, however, were all or almost all made in e province, and so the designs on them must have been commissioned by ealthy people who were either of immigrant stock or wished to be entified with the wider Roman world. Certainly the mosaic factories at rencester, capital of the Romano-British West Country, used images of rpheus and Venus as their trademarks, so the purchase of them need not ve indicated religious belief. Some motifs were very standardized, and ven different attributes by the vendors or purchasers: the same armed male figure, for example, could in different contexts be labelled Minerva, rigantia, Victory or Dea Panthea.[76] Another possible form of portable ligious icon may have been coins, which often bore images of deities and ere, as said, deposited on sacred sites in large quantity. At some, those aring particular goddesses or gods were chosen; but it is usually ıpossible to tell whether the value of the currency or the figure upon it was ore important in the use of coins as offerings.[77]

Likewise, the frequency with which hunting scenes and gladiatorial mbats appear on the mosaic floors of villas could signify an interest in emes of life and death, or simply pleasure in these forms of entertainment, e most exciting available to the wealthy. Decorations on pottery may present religious belief, scenes of actual ritual, episodes from popular yth or legend, or mere excitement or humour. Any of these explanations uld account for the men in animal skins and antlers, within a woodland tting, on a sherd from Colchester. Another, from Horsey Toll in

ambridgeshire, made at a factory in the Nene Valley, is etched with a man nning towards a naked woman who is holding a huge penis. She is inting to her genitals, he is ejaculating; the scene could span a huge ectrum of explanation, from the deepest solemnity to the greatest ribaldry. ne penis is a common symbol in Roman-British culture, fashioned in stone pottery or carved as amulets or hung from necklaces. In many contexts it idently encouraged strength, virility, or the ability to stand strongly right or grow. As such, it was often carved upon buildings to encourage em to stand long and well: at the Hadrian's Wall fort now called Chesters, ey were put on to the bridge abutment, bath-house and headquarters.[78]

Quite frequently, dedications to deities are inscribed with the names of ose who made them. It is much rarer for these people to explain why they d this, but such moments do, invaluably, occur. We can, perhaps, share in e exhilaration of the prefect of a cavalry detachment, Gaius Tetius Veturius icianus, who set up an altar to the Roman god of hunting, Silvanus, on the en moor of Bollihope Common, above Weardale in the Pennine Hills. He d killed a huge wild boar which had escaped all those who had hunted it fore.[79] Another officer and huntsman, the centurion of infantry Julius cundus, set up an altar in honour of Silvanus on another Pennine moor, ar the fort at Bowes. This officer, however, knew that the land concerned longed to a native god, Vinotonus, and took care to honour him in an scription as well.[80] Other soldiers were inspired by more peaceful periences. At Carvoran, a fort in the Hadrian's Wall zone, M. Caecilius natianus had a vision – perhaps in a dream – of the goddess Virgo aecilius ('the heavenly virgin'), whom he equated with Cybele, the Asian ddess who presided over a mystery religion, and (loyally) the empress lia Domna. He recorded his gratitude to her on stone.[81]

It was not only men who left expressions of devotion to deities in the rthern military zone. In 1963 a sandstone altar was revealed by ploughing the site of a fort at Westerwood in Dunbartonshire, near the western end the short-lived second-century frontier between Forth and Clyde. It had en erected by Vibia Pacata, the wife of a centurion of the Sixth Legion tioned there, to repay a vow, in the presence of her family. The dedication as 'to the celestial goddess of the woodlands and the crossroads', who was

obably Diana, and it seems most likely that the vow was made to this ddess in her role as supreme patroness of childbirth, in the course of a fficult labour. The mention of crossroads, however, recalls a different ddess, Hecate, supreme deity of magic; in which case Vibia Pacata may ve been living an even more interesting life up there above the River yde. At any rate, it evokes a wonderful picture of an indomitable Roman atron, keeping a promise to her goddess.[82] A different sort of testimony to rsonal faith was found in 1979 near Thetford, on the Norfolk chalk heaths, hich seemed to consist of the ritual impedimenta of a local cult of Faunus, e Roman god of the countryside. This appears to have been carried on by a ale club, for it included thirty-two spoons, each inscribed with an epithet the god and the name of an individual devotee. Faunus was clearly entified here as a patron of agriculture, because he got names like 'Long ar', 'Fosterer of Corn', 'Mead-Maker' and 'Giver of Plenty'.[83] The odd ing was that the farmers whose names were inscribed were native Britons, d the divine epithets were also in the native language: a rare proof of how r Roman religion could be assimilated by the conquered people.

The most vivid examples of personal acts of religious ritual to survive om Roman Britain are probably the lead tablets upon which curses were ritten, which invoked the help of a deity against human beings who had ne the writer wrong. They have been found at half a dozen places, above at Bath, where about 130 were thrown into the sacred spring, and Uley, here about 140 were either fixed to the temple wall or collected in a special om. The most common wrong concerned was theft, whether of a material ject or of a loved one. Sometimes the name of the offender (or a list of em) was recorded, while at others the aggrieved party called down (or up) vine wrath against an unknown adversary. The precise nature of the nishment was usually left to the goddess or god, though the degree of it quested could range from repentance and restitution to a lingering death. ore or less typical of those at Bath was one written by Solinus, who sought e aid of Sulis Minerva to recover the bathing suit and cloak with which he d come to the baths fed by her sacred waters, and which had been stolen ere. He beseeched her to allow no 'sleep or health to him who has done me rong, whether slave or free, unless he reveals himself and brings these ods to your temple'.[84] The author of perhaps the most famous of all such

blets in Britain was Saturnina, who went for help to Mercury at Uley. She d lost a linen cloth to a thief, perhaps from a washing line (the value of the m indicates how slender her means were), and wanted the god's aid to cover it; but was not sure which god she was addressing. First she ldressed Mars and Silvanus, and only after crossing them out did she get e right name, and call on Mercury to curse the criminal. Did she start to rite on the tablet and then have difficulty in finding a shrine to the first two ities? Or did she find all three honoured under the same roof at Uley, and ve difficulty in making up her mind which would be the most effective? , faced by the handsome limestone statue in the Uley temple, did she fail first, being unfamiliar with Roman iconography, to realize whom it presented? We cannot know, but her anger and pain, consequent on the ss, ring out from her writing.[85]

Burial

One very important and ritually loaded placement of material in the earth mained the disposal of human corpses: and here the Roman invasion ought two major changes. The first was the banning of burials inside ttlements, as the much greater size of urban centres in the empire made em into a health risk. Instead, they were placed, usually in cemeteries, tside the occupied zone, and these graveyards could be very large if they rved proportionately big towns. The one to the east of Roman London obably accumulated around 100,000 bodies.[86] The graves were often so atly arranged alongside each other that their outlines must have been arked; and they usually contained an entire local population, apparently e first time since Britain was settled that whole communities were equently buried together. As few rural burial grounds have been identified, wever, and as it is not clear what percentage of the population of a town e known cemeteries around it held, it is not yet certain if wholesale burial d indeed become the rule. The second reform was to disarm the civilian pulation, including retired soldiers, so that weapons largely vanished from aves and the native warrior aristocracy, with its military trappings, mutated to a colonial nobility accompanied by goods suited to a peaceful and xurious lifestyle. One special mark of this was the making of large, corated, stone chests – sarcophagi – of the Mediterranean style, to contain

e bodies of the wealthy. None the less, these reforms were imposed on a twork of local traditions, developed (as described earlier) in the centuries fore the Romans arrived, which still showed through Roman custom and w. Elaborate chambers with rich goods were still found in the former ngdom of the Catuvellauni, mass cemeteries with similar graves in that of e Durotriges, and cremated bones in urns in that of the Cantii.

Indeed, the overlap was the more evident in that Rome took some time to nvert friendly members of the native royalty and aristocracy to its stoms. The most celebrated recent example of continuity of practice, as anifested in burial, was found in 1991–2. It was the grave of a man who as probably a client king who died around the year 50, excavated at Folly ane, St Albans, beside the new Roman-style city of Verulamium. It was side a large enclosure, and consisted of a pit in which his cremated bones ere buried with silverware melted in his pyre. Beside it was a shaft leading a wooden chamber in which the body had apparently been laid in state ith the metalwork and a valuable Roman pottery dinner service and wine rs. A mound was erected over both. Also, early in the province's history ere may have been some self-conscious antiquarianism, as large round ounds resembling Bronze Age barrows were built to cover the cremated nes of aristocrats. Over a hundred are known, especially in the south-east, d the most impressive are the three survivors of a cemetery of seven in a oodland glade near Bartlow among the chalk hills at the south-eastern rner of Cambridgeshire. One of these is in fact the tallest ancient burial ound in England, and the group was the biggest one of Roman tumuli in rthern Europe, raised over cremation burials put inside glass urns within ooden chests, and surrounded by handsome bronze and ceramic objects ainly associated with feasting. The nineteenth-century excavators found at lamps had been left burning inside the chests. Such big mounds were, wever, also raised at Rome itself over the cremated remains of early nperors, such as Augustus, so that the custom may have been a direct itation of the most distinguished Roman practice and not one of ehistoric British monuments.[87] None the less, older traditions certainly did ger in the geography of funerary habits: outside military sites, formal rials remained as rare in the western and northern parts of the Roman-cupied area of Britain as they had been in the preceding period. Where

ey are encountered, they are commonly in boundary ditches, another link ith prehistoric custom.[88]

On the other hand, in the matter of funerary custom as in others, the ovince was linked into wider developments in the empire, of which the eatest was that cremation was the prevalent fashion during the first and cond centuries, to be succeeded by inhumation in the third and fourth. ıey were very different modes, as the body was kept entire in the latter rm, while in the former it was not only altered by fire, but in most if not all ɔmano-British cremation burials (as in those of the Iron Age), many – even e majority – of the burnt bones were left on the pyre, and only some ıried.[89] The shift to inhumation affected everybody from emperors to poor, ıt was as silent and little explained as the manner in which British men oved from wearing beards to shaving cleanly, and then back again, tween the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries: even highly literate cieties rarely seem capable of accounting for changes of fashion.[90] The ovince followed imperial practice, also, in that the move to inhumation ok the form of bodies stretched out on their backs, instead of crouched on eir sides as in the British Iron Age, though the crouched burials had ıgered in some rural areas. At some places, such as Colchester, the change ɔm cremation to inhumation was so sudden, in the mid third century, that it oks like an official move; but no decree for it has survived anywhere.[91] ıere are indeed no surviving written sources which explain funeral customs d grave decorations in Roman Britain, and so the evidence is all material, ith every attendant problem in the interpretation of it. We still have no idea ho arranged the funerals, whether professional undertakers, priestesses or iests; nor do we know the last wishes of the deceased, or the mourning mily. We have no means of reconstructing most funeral rites: the laying ıt of the body, its progress to the grave, and whatever happened at the ırial, are all lost to us. We do not know what funeral pyres looked like, ough so many objects were buried from some of them that they may have en multi-tier. What is evident is the great fund of symbolism drawn upon r imagery in and around graves. Deities themselves are rarely represented, hough the different religious traditions of the empire furnished at least a ɔzen with special responsibility for the dead. Instead, the only divine being ɔmmonly associated with Romano-British burials is Venus – if the clay

gurines, which seem to be found mainly in female graves, do indeed present the goddess. Instead, a range of motifs is associated with tombs, ch as cupids (perhaps as soothing companions for the dead on their urney); axes (perhaps symbols of power and protection); dolphins (perhaps r a journey across some otherworld ocean); poppies (perhaps as givers of ep and banishers of pain, if they were the opium-bearing kind); stars aybe as symbols of eternity); pine cones (from the dark evergreen tree hich was associated with mourning); and lions (which could be protecting gures or devouring symbols of death).[92]

(a)

(b)

79 Two groups of Romano-British burial mounds:

(a) The largest, in original number of mounds and in their height, the Bartlow Hills. This is the ıthernmost, with the next one adjoining it to the left.

(b) A pair of more usual size but still colossal by the standards of prehistoric round barrows, in a adow above Thornborough Bridge, Buckinghamshire.

Grave goods – found with both cremations and inhumations – provide a nilarly provocative and tantalizing set of possible suggestions. Those most equently deposited were lamps (perhaps to light the tomb for the dead on eir way to the next world); food vessels (either to nourish the deceased or offerings for guardian spirits or deities, or as the containers for the funeral ast, contaminated by the act beyond reuse); keys (perhaps to open ghostly ors); stones and pebbles (possibly good-luck charms); animals' teeth hich could be the same); coins in the mouth or hand of the corpse (which ould, if following Mediterranean precedent, be to pay the ferryman of the ad to transport the spirit into the next world); and hobnailed boots uggesting that the deceased was expected to go on a long walk into that orld). The only category of these objects which had Iron Age precedents in itain were the pots. The sheer variety of grave goods seems to bear out hat Greek and Roman literature infers: that the peoples of the empire had a eat diversity of opinions concerning the fate of the dead, even within the me ethnic and cultural groups. It was particularly uncertain whether the irits of the departed remained near their bodies, or passed away from em. The combination of material placed in graves was as individual as the oice of objects itself: there were sixty different such assemblages placed ith eighty-nine burials surveyed in a study of cremation cemeteries in sex, London and Kent. It should also be emphasized that most burials had goods at all, so that coins – among the most fashionable of objects to ace in graves – were found with only 2 per cent of the bodies excavated in large cemetery at Chichester.[93] As in the case of other kinds of ritualized haviour, burial customs were often highly individual and even iosyncratic. One man who died in what is now Kent was cremated sitting a chair with a cockerel in his lap, perhaps as a gift to Mercury, or as a eal, or to wake him up when the time came to start his journey. Five wine rs were then smashed around the charred remains, as libations to deities, ovision for the next world or just the remains of an impressive wake, and e Holborough round barrow was built over the site.[94]

Some unusual kinds of burial strike a modern observer as sinister. Also Kent, one cremation urn was sealed with cement, while another was cked with sharp flints: both acts could have been to confine the dead or to otect them.[95] Beheaded bodies are quite common in the second half of the

riod, usually with the heads laid in the grave: 24 of more than 200 omano-British inhumations recorded along the upper Thames fall into this tegory. A quarter of the bodies were headless in cemeteries at Chignall St mes, in the clay country of central Essex, and on Winterbourne Down in e Wiltshire chalk hills. They tend to be found in graves that are otherwise rmal in their position in a cemetery, in their layout and in the provision of ods and coffins. Some heads had clearly been removed after death, though is difficult to ascertain this in most cases.[96] It is possible that some of the dies were those of executed criminals, as beheading was the normal mode lethal punishment for Roman citizens, after which they were returned to eir relatives for burial. On the other hand, the act of removal of the head ight have been a reverent one, to free the spirit from the body and help it its journey. A third possibility is that it was inflicted on individuals whose ode of life or death had created a fear that they would return to haunt the ving: in which case the act may have been believed to silence and mobilize them for good. A fourth is that it was not the product of fear but contempt, an insult inflicted on the corpse of a person who had incurred eat unpopularity in life: the statues of public figures in the Roman world hose memories were hated were beheaded in similar manner. It seems kely that all or most of these explanations account for the custom in itain, but they cannot readily be distinguished.

The same problem of interpretation attends prone burial, bodies laid on eir front instead of their back in the grave. In Christian times this became garded as a terrible punishment, seriously harming the person's chances of ernal life. It was fairly common in Roman Britain, especially in the untryside of the south of the province, being found (for example) in a arter of the seventy-eight inhumations in a graveyard near Fairford beside e Thames in Oxfordshire. All sexes and ages were affected by it, but pecially adult men. Some may have ended up in that position by accident, cause they were clearly flung carelessly into the grave, but others were refully laid out. They tend to have no or few goods, but occasionally they e the most richly endowed with objects.[97] The custom may have been tended to assist the deceased to go faster into the underworld, or to prevent em from returning to haunt the world of the living (again), or to damage ances of a new life in the manner of what became the Christian belief. It

ay simply have marked out the person thus treated as guilty of deviance or nsgression in some way: and indeed many of the prone bodies, unlike the adless kind, tend to be found on the edge of a cemetery or beyond it, as if gregated. Once again, actions of dismemberment or positioning in burial llowed general rules but had an individual character. At Kimmeridge, neath the Purbeck Hills of Dorset, a group of elderly women were interred the late third century with their heads severed and placed by their feet, ter the lower jaws had been detached. Each was given a spindle whorl. The hole rite may have been intended to honour a group of weavers and set free eir spirits at maximum speed, or to humiliate the corpses of women ecuted for suspected harmful magic (the whorl being the symbol of the ites) and prevent them from cursing even in the grave.[98]

A discussion of apparently disturbing burials leads inevitably back to the sue of human sacrifice. At Plaxtol in Kent a body was laid out with a large one on its breast, as if to pin it down, and cremated remains with rich ods were then placed around it. This looks like a foundation deposit, to nsecrate an elite graveyard, and the question arises of whether the person ncerned died naturally.[99] At the end of the fourth century, a coffin ntaining only coins was put into a grave in the Lankhills cemetery at inchester, and over that were laid the bodies of two dogs and the capitated corpse of a young man, whose head was set at his knees with a in in its mouth.[100] The site looks like a cenotaph for somebody lost at sea in war, who had been given two animal companions and a human one. rhaps the latter was a beheaded criminal, or a slave or servant who had ed opportunely, or whose death had been inflicted for the rite, with or thout his consent.

Such suspicious burials are also found outside cemeteries. The position of human remains with the material placed in water or pits was uch rarer in the Roman period than in the Iron Age, but it continued. ention has been made of those in Lindow Moss, most or all of which seem be Romano-British. Ten wells, scattered from the West Country to adrian’s Wall and including Coventina’s, contained human heads. Some ere already skulls when put there, but others were freshly severed, and me were obviously associated, like other deposits, with the digging or the

osure of the shafts. A cistern in Caerwent, the main Roman town of South ales, had two skulls placed in it and a complete skeleton laid over it as if to al it.[101] Human bones were also put into the boundary ditches at London d Canterbury, and into pits or ditches. Headless babies were laid in the undations of a temple complex at Springhead, Kent, and whole babies side the walls of the strong third-century coastal fortress of Reculver hich guarded the southern flank of the Thames Estuary. Their small bodies e also found buried at villas, in much the same manner as animal bones.[102] rts of six individuals, mostly limbs and heads, were interred outside the ain gate of Roman Colchester. Temple buildings and precincts casionally held human remains which had seemingly been given ualized, but not reverent, treatment. The enclosure of one at Lowbury Hill, xfordshire contained the grave of a woman whose facial bones had been moved, while the temple precinct at Folly Lane, St Albans had pits in hich pots in the shape of human heads had been placed, along with one al, defleshed, head, of a youth killed by a savage blow to his skull. This mple was built on the site of the funerary enclosure of the first-century bleman or king mentioned earlier and when he was buried three women, l with disabilities which would have affected their mobility, were interred its entrance. Another temple at St Albans had a pit associated with it hich contained the head of a teenage boy who had been battered to death, ter which his skull was apparently skinned and mounted on a pole. A ligious precinct in the city of Wroxeter, Shropshire yielded fragments of man skull which had been cleaned of flesh and then oiled. One had been alped, and another apparently mounted on a bronze base.[103]

These finds have long prompted speculation that they may be of victims a tradition of sacrifice which continued clandestinely under Roman rule en though the latter officially forbade it. In recent years this possibility has en raised especially by Miranda Aldhouse-Green, R. M. J. Isserlin and lison Taylor.[104] It runs up, however, against now familiar problems of terpretation. As Guy de la Bédoyère has pointed out, there is a world of fference between the sacrifice of a child to consecrate the foundation of a w building, and the use of a child who had died of natural causes for the me purpose, but the archaeological remains are identical.[105] Indeed, even man bodies laid in foundations may simply have been there because a

uilding site made a convenient dumping ground for them. The parts of eleton found in wells, city or fort ditches and temple precincts may have en those of criminals, which had been put on public display as object ssons before being disposed of in these different ways. It could indeed be at bits of corpse were thought to possess magical properties, but the rate of ath, natural and by execution, in Roman Britain should have ensured a pply of them without the need to kill the owners for no other reason. hen all this is said, the hypothesis of lingering and clandestine human crifice remains tenable; but a further problem with it is that it has often en articulated with the presumption that a native tradition of the practice d existed in pre-Roman Britain to be perpetuated. As suggested above, is is itself not proven.

It is perhaps salutary to emphasize at this point that most treatments of e dead in the province testify to the abiding affection of those responsible d their determination to ensure the best future for those whom they buried. mong many moving memorials that survive from the province, the rsonal favourite of this author is that erected at Bath by Magnius, for his eedwoman and foster-daughter' Mercatilla. It is in the Roman Baths useum, and records that the girl died aged one year, six months and twelve ys. The precision with which her short life was recorded testifies to her ther's love, as does the fact that he had theoretically owned her as a slave, esumably with her mother (of whom he must also have been fond), and d both given her legal freedom and adopted her as his own child. His fection and generosity were ill served by fate, and it is possible that he ought her to the temple and sacred spring in a plea for her recovery when e fell ill, only to give her a tombstone there as a final testimony to the ength of his feeling. The hearts of most fathers must go out to him.

Retro-paganism

A theme which has been sounded with mounting force during the course this book has been the manner in which successive ages of prehistory ve appeared to engage with the monuments left to them from earlier times. ne increase in such engagements of course, has been proportionate to the owth in the number and range of such monuments over the millennia, eating an inherited human landscape ever more complex and ever more

allenging to the imagination. It is possible, indeed even likely, that a ocess as dramatic as that of the Roman occupation of most of Britain eatly compounded this response. It created a visible break with many pects of the past which may have provoked the natives, as well as the comers, to relate more intensely to previous human activity in the land, d especially to ceremonial activity which seemed to connect with that nd's numinous power or powers. The radical alteration of the political, eological, social and economic context to life in most of the island would ve had dramatic implications for the ways in which people won legitimacy r their actions and formed their own identities; and the vestiges of the man past have usually played a major role in both enterprises.

Between 1988 and 1993, two archaeologists, N. B. Aitchison and Ken ark, drew attention to the large amount of Romano-British pottery, coins d burials found on or in Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows, and suggested at these structures were regarded, in that later period, as sacred places.[106] 1998 Howard Williams took this idea further, to find seventy-nine cases Romano-British burials in or near prehistoric sites, although in only ghteen was the association clearly direct and deliberate. He linked these ith the deposition of objects at prehistoric monuments and the construction thirteen Roman-British temples and amphitheatres at or near pre-Roman uctures or graves, to argue that these places had become foci for cults of e dead, and through them of supernatural beings.[107] Such insights made a od fit with Richard Hingley's observation that Bronze Age weapons and ols were sometimes recovered from Romano-British sites, and Paul obinson's that miniature axes of a Bronze Age style seem to have been ed as amulets in Roman-period Wiltshire.[108] All this was highly ggestive, but, as the archaeologists concerned were careful to stress, not nclusive. More recently, a further study of the Romano-British reuse of ehistoric sites has supplied more data and made conclusions easier to aw, even if the matter cannot yet be resolved with perfect confidence.[109]

This study made a close examination of three very different classes of e. The first of these consisted of the cave systems of the Carboniferous nestone landscapes on either side of the Bristol Channel, in South Wales, orth Somerset and the islands off Pembrokeshire. They are some of the

ost impressive and abundant in Britain, and by the Roman period their tural attributes would have been enhanced, as sources of wonder, by the idence in them of human occupation stretching back for tens of millennia d of animal occupation, often by magnificent extinct beasts, extending for ndreds more. These relics would have been exposed, at many caverns, by rther human or animal activity or by the action of streams or tides. Any sessment of the extent of a Romano-British presence at them presents ecial difficulties, and any interpretation of it has to reckon with more. ost of the sites concerned were dug out by antiquaries in the nineteenth d early twentieth centuries, who were often deficient in care and in the eping of records even by the standards of the time, and little interested in riods after the Palaeolithic. Even caves which they did not touch have rmally been visited and disturbed by local people in modern times, and e action of water has ruined deposits at more. Even when all these oblems are taken into account, it can be claimed that about half of the ves of the South Welsh and Somerset limestone regions which have been bmitted to extensive archaeological examination have shown traces of tivity in the Roman period. In most cases this took the form of relatively nited deposits of portable objects, above all coins, pottery and small rsonal ornaments. On the whole, the more heavily a cave had been used ring prehistory, the more likely it was to attract interest; and this factor ok precedence over more practical considerations such as the size, cessibility or dryness of the site. Although this activity spanned the oman occupation, there was an apparent concentration in the last two nturies of it. A much more rapid look at cave systems elsewhere in the ovince – in the Wye Valley, Peak District and Pennines – showed much the me pattern.

The second kind of site considered consisted of prehistoric burial ounds, and especially of the Cotswold–Severn group of Neolithic ambered long barrows. As some of the most impressive monuments of itish prehistory, often dominating the landscapes in which they stood, ese could move the ancient imagination as much as the modern. In both ses, also, it would have counted that when the interior of their chambers as exposed by weathering or human or animal excavations, they often ntained masses of human bone. Once again, they were attractive to

ctorian excavators who were often hasty and careless and left no or adequate reports; and were moreover much more interested in the original ture of these monuments than in relics of later activity at them. rthermore, they usually dug straight for where chambers would most obably be, and ignored the rest of the mound, which is very commonly the cation of Romano-British material. When all this is said, a similar pattern deposition is found to that in the caves: of coins, pots (whole or smashed), ads, tiles and pieces of metalwork. It has been detected in the majority of otswold–Severn long barrows which have received careful and well-corded excavation. By contrast, the smaller Bronze Age round barrows of e Cotswold region received less attention. A slightly different pattern was vealed in Derbyshire, where the Neolithic tomb-shrines had round mounds hich were not much more striking than some of those built in the same gion during the Bronze Age. The largest of the Neolithic monuments were erefore given a considerable number of Romano-British objects, along ith some of the most impressive of the Bronze Age round barrows. Coins edominated, followed by pottery and then brooches and pins. Again, a ore cursory survey of other evidence shows up the same pattern: earthen ng barrows have frequently yielded Roman material, above all coins. By ntrast, the exposed Neolithic stone chambers of Wales attracted almost no tention: the people of Roman Britain were drawn to substantial ancient ounds.

The final category of site considered was made up of some of the most ectacular prehistoric monuments of the Wessex chalk hills: Stonehenge, vebury and the Uffington White Horse. At Stonehenge much evidence ust have been lost, because of repeated poorly recorded excavations there the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: but none the less, more Roman ttery has been found there than that from the Neolithic or Bronze Age, gether with coins and ornaments. Much less has been found at the Avebury nge, but then that has been much less investigated, and the megaliths at e end of one of the stone avenues leading to it seem to have been adapted make a Romano-British shrine, while a second cult centre was established Silbury. Three shafts have been discovered to the east of that great mound, led with Roman-British deposits, and may have been part of a ring of them g around it. There may also have been a stone temple built nearby. At

ffington the hill fort immediately above the White Horse was given
ıantities of coins, metalwork and (above all) pots, spread across the
terior, and the long barrow near it was turned into a cemetery. This was all
use of the sites rather than continued use, for Stonehenge and Avebury
ow very little sign of Iron Age activity, and the Uffington fort had been
sused for at least eight centuries before the Roman Britons began to leave
)jects there. Moreover, activity at all three seems to have been most
onounced later, rather than earlier, in the Roman period.

It looks, therefore, very much as if the people of Roman Britain took a
idespread interest in both the most impressive of the ritual monuments
hich survived from earlier periods and in imposing natural places which
d been frequented by prehistoric humans and animals. As yet no
scriptions or objects dedicated to fulfilling specific vows have been found
these sites, and so the focus of this interest is not recoverable. We do not
ıow if it was formal or informal, public or private; if it involved
dividuals, families or larger social groups, or was dedicated to specific
ities, or to spirits connected to the place, or to dead human beings. The
)jects found at these sites were mainly personal possessions, and of
latively low value. In general, they resemble those deposited in what seem
have been ritual contexts elsewhere, in water, pits and ditches, save for a
eater prominence of coins and a relative absence of animal bones (though
ese were numerous at Silbury and also found in some caves). As such,
ey point up the whole problem of determining significance when
nsidering these sorts of deposit in general, the most common trace of
)parent ceremonial behaviour in Roman Britain. As in the case of the
ehistoric evidence, we can only speculate about the mass of biodegradable
ferings which may have been made in the same places and left no
idence: of food and drink, and of wooden or textile objects. The pottery
und in those places could have been important because of its contents
efore or during the rite in which it was deposited), its association with past
present owners, the human activity with which it had been involved, the
aterial of which it was composed, or its capacity to resist decay, even when
oken into fragments. Coins could be, as pointed out earlier, not merely
)jects of intrinsic value (though those chosen for deposition were usually
w-grade) and of social currency, but religious items charged with the

ower of the deities and inscriptions placed upon them, and of course mbols of human authority as well.

Returning to the specific context of the leaving of such objects in caves d at prehistoric sites, it is easy and important to note the element of ntinuity in such behaviour: after all, the ritual burial or placement and andonment of human possessions has been an activity identifiable in every riod of British prehistory, and especially in the Iron Age. On the other nd, the people of Roman Britain were not carrying on the same practice at e same places as their immediate predecessors. Instead, it seems that they ere deliberately enacting rites at a large number of prominent prehistoric onuments, and in caves which had formerly been frequented by humans, cluding many which had attracted no interest in the Iron Age, or even been tively avoided. Moreover, this activity did not peak in the earlier years of e Roman occupation. Wherever it can be dated (and here coins are pecially helpful) the same pattern obtains: such deposits were made roughout the Roman period, and began quite soon after its mmencement, but the great majority were made in the last hundred and ty years, from the mid third century to the abandonment of the province Rome.

This has important implications for an understanding of their meaning. ne context is at least relatively clear: the great expansion of activity and osperity in the countryside during the later years of the province's istence, illustrated by the multiplication of villas, market towns and – rhaps most relevant in this case – the temples which have been termed obable sites of pilgrimage. This abounding wealth and energy in rural oman Britain may well have manifested also in a further sacralization of e landscape, in which some of the increasing, and increasingly affluent, pulation chose to honour monuments and places associated with earlier remonial activity, which offered a link to the remote past and with it rhaps a stronger relationship to a spirit world, divine or ancestral. It is teresting in this connection to consider the study made by Chris Gosden d Gary Lock of the archaeology of the chalk hills known as the Berkshire owns. They noted that the Iron Age enclosures there were built on top of onze Age predecessors, despite long gaps in occupation of the sites, and ggested that the memory of those predecessors was preserved in

nealogical histories. By contrast, in the Uffington area the Roman Britons ıked together monuments of all ages around the White Horse as if they had come part of a generalized sense of a mythical past.[110] The booming onomy and society of the late Romano-British countryside is not sufficient itself to account for such a shift, nor indeed for the ever growing, and rhaps unprecedented, amount of attention given to sites of earlier activity: apparently religious form of ancient antiquarianism. It is easy to pothesize that the shock of the Roman conquest might well have served to t the British off from a sense of easy belonging to their own land and its onuments, and encourage a need to reconnect with it in new ways. If the fect concerned seems very delayed, in that this apparent urge to connection was at its strongest in the final centuries of Roman occupation, is may have been because it was only in that later period that the untryside became effectively Romanized for the first time, producing the cessary sense of cultural dissonance and dislocation. There is, however, ıe further factor which may be taken into account, that from the mid third ntury the empire experienced increasing religious tension and division, lminating in the official adoption of Christianity and (decades after that) e official condemnation of paganism. It is possible – though no more – that is atmosphere evoked in some British pagans a need to reconnect with the ots of their religions, through the apparent relics of those who had nerated the traditional deities of the island in previous times. It may have en the first point at which those pagans embraced the totality of their own ritage, and with it a mythical past which embodied and mediated a lationship with the land.

6

THE CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY

A CLASH OF RELIGIONS, A BLEND OF RELIGIONS

THE PEOPLES OF prehistoric Britain could well have undergone
periences of religious conversion, if the cultural changes that ushered in
mb-shrines, stone circles or hill forts were accompanied by major
terations in the way in which human relations with divinity were
nceived. In the historic ancient European world, however, such
ndamental shifts of mentality were not a part of religious behaviour. A
orld-picture which conceived of the existence of many deities allowed
ople to form intense personal attachments to particular goddesses and
ds, and sometimes to relinquish them, without causing any fundamental
ovement in the manner in which they viewed the cosmos, and the nature of
ligion. The appearance of the faith of Christ required and produced just
ch a seismic change, by breaking most of the conventions of religious
lture as they had existed in Europe and the Mediterranean basin since
story began. It claimed the existence of a single, all-powerful, all-knowing,
iversally present and totally good deity, who had created the world and
rected its fate. It also preached the existence of a force of cosmic evil in
e universe, inferior by far to the single god but powerful in worldly affairs
d set on subverting the divine plan for the universe. All creation was
erefore polarized between those two forces, and human beings were
fered the stark choice of salvation, by embracing the worship of the true
ity and obeying his rules and commands, or damnation, by ignoring or
posing them and choosing other religious loyalties. The divine beings of
her religions were regarded as non-existent, having the status of lies,
ceptions or allegories, or of personifications and servants of the force of
il: effectively, as demons. The divine will was expressed through sacred
itings, which true believers had to understand and expound correctly,
eating the new discipline of theology, which replaced philosophy as the
ain means of understanding the universe and the human place in it. The

ntral mystery of this religion was the insistence that its god had incarnated human form, just once, in the person of Jesus Christ, through the agency a mortal mother, in order to bring a clearer revelation to humanity and fer it a better chance of salvation. Acceptance of all these tenets, and entry to the community of those who believed in them, was signalled by ptism, an initiation rite requiring immersion in, or sprinkling with, water. ese essential characteristics are common to all forms of the faith ncerned, and justify the umbrella term of Christianity for it.

The vast and unified polity of the Roman Empire favoured the spread of is new religion from its birthplace in Palestine, but the utter rejection of e legitimacy of other religious loyalties, embodied in the Christian claim, ade it impossible for Rome to assimilate it peacefully. Local persecutions Christians occurred, sporadically and briefly, in the first and second nturies, to be succeeded by more general attempts to repress them in the id third and early fourth. In the fourth century, imperial policy altered first accepting Christianity as the dominant faith, and then as the only one, hich increasingly involved the official curtailment, and then the tirpation, of older religious traditions, to which the new Latin term of ganism was applied.[1] As the new religion reached peoples who spoke ermanic languages, an equivalent word, ‘heathen’, was used for adherents the old religious ways.[2] The progress of the faith of Christ from rsecuted minority to triumphant and intolerant establishment was a fitful d uneven one, but none the less spanned just a single very long lifetime, fectively the length of the fourth century. In the first decade of that period, was subjected to the most widespread and serious of the official oscriptions, with many Christians put to death. Between 312 and 337 the nperor Constantine the Great gradually established it as the most favoured ligion in the empire, and suppressed a few pagan cults. His sons continued is work by imposing increasing restrictions upon specific aspects of pagan orship. In 361, however, the last of his family, Julian, revealed himself to a pagan, and set about the restoration of the old religions. Julian was lled in battle by the Persians after just two years, and was succeeded by ristian emperors who returned their faith to supremacy but were tolerant others. From 380 onwards, this tolerance was steadily eroded, until in 394

ıeodosius the Great ordered the closure of temples and the cessation of ıgan rites across the whole empire.[3]

This story is one familiar to anybody acquainted with late Roman story, as is its ironic sequel: that the triumph of Christianity coincided with e beginning of the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire. Britain as the first province to be lost, between 407 and 410. However, Christian ccess in converting the northern invaders who had brought down the omans, and then in carrying the faith into their homelands and beyond, sured that the whole of Europe was at least nominally converted by the d of the Middle Ages, and most of it by the end of the first millennium. ıe British Isles had apparently all embraced the new religion by the year 0. Such is clear: what is not clear is the process by which this latter result as achieved. Before the year 597 there is virtually no reliable data; after en, we have a story, or set of stories, for most of the archipelago, but ızzles and disputes still abound.

Evidence for Romano-British Christianity

Four centuries of the most diligent and intelligent scholarly investigation ve failed to establish any consensus concerning the extent, nature and ccess of the Christian faith in Roman Britain. In the period since 1980, illiam Frend, Martin Henig and Dorothy Watts have argued for a surgence of paganism in the late fourth century, commencing with the cession of Julian, which rolled back the early successes of Christianity ıder Constantine and his sons. Ken Dark and Martin Millett have contested is idea. Edward James and Kenneth Hylson-Smith have concluded that it is ılikely that the bulk of people in the province had converted before the ıpire fell, while Michelle Brown, David Petts and Barbara Yorke have ıphasized instead the flourishing nature of the late Romano-British ıurch, and its permeation of all levels of society. Neil Faulkner, however, s declared it to have been a religion of the Romanized upper class, with no rge popular following, a view which echoes that of Frend. Malcolm ımbert has called it the faith of a minority, but one that was well tablished and especially strong in the south-east.[4] To some extent these are fferences of emphasis, though important differences: Lambert's formula, r example, could reconcile a number of the other views stated above. Still,

ere is a distinct gap between David Petts's conclusion that Christianity was dynamic and successful force in Britain by the time that Roman rule ıded, paving the way for its success in subsequent centuries, and the one oposed by Faulkner, Frend and Watts, that it was dependent on imperial onsorship and enfeebled as soon as the empire fell.

The reason for the difficulty is (of course) the nature of the evidence, hich is almost wholly archaeological. There is a little textual material. ıree British martyrs were later remembered as victims of pagan rsecution, Aaron and Julius at Caerleon (or perhaps York) and Alban at erulamium, whose shrine later became the focus of the new town of St lbans.[5] Malcolm Lambert has concluded that these saints attest to a ıristian presence in Britain by the third century, while David Petts has ımmented that all may be mythical.[6] We are on firmer ground with the list churchmen who attended the Council of Arles in 314, which included ree British bishops from different cities: a higher number than that sent ɔm the northern half of Gaul. The council concerned was held soon after e cessation of the biggest of all the official persecutions of Christians, hen their numbers should have been reduced and their hierarchy disrupted; this is good evidence for a well-established and widespread presence of e religion in Britain by this date.[7] It might be expected that imperial pport would have subsequently greatly expanded it, but here direct written idence runs out. Certainly by 396 British bishops were numerous enough hold a council, at which a Gaulish churchman arbitrated in a quarrel tween them.[8] None of the major players in the province's politics in the st fifty years of Roman rule is noted as having been pagan, while two – ratian and Gerontius, who were prominent in the final decade of the 400s – ere specifically characterized by commentators as natives.[9] Suggestive as is is, it does not do much to reveal what was actually going on in the ovince.

Here the material evidence comes into play, and is divided into several tegories. Decorations in fourth-century villas have been treated as stimony to a Christian presence, especially the chi-rho symbol, or cross ith a loop on the upper end, which all over the empire stood for that faith. ıe problem is that it was also, under Christian emperors (who ruled Britain

all but two of the years after 312), a sign of imperial authority. While the estige conferred upon a sectarian image by this sponsorship is significant itself, it tells us nothing of the degree of personal conviction held by the ople who used it.[10] Much excitement was created in 1963, when a mosaic vement was found in a villa at Hinton St Mary, in the Blackmoor Vale of rthern Dorset. It showed a male head with the chi-rho behind it, and was iled as the earliest depiction of Christ in north-western Europe; but it was so suggested that it could be a portrait of an emperor, and the matter is resolved.[11] It may be significant that the same building also had a mosaic presenting the pagan hero Bellerophon. Another Dorset villa mosaic, at ampton among the chalk hills further south, was discovered and drawn in e eighteenth century and is now lost. It had the chi-rho, along with presentations of or references to pagan deities (Neptune, Dionysus and pids), and Bellerophon again. Such a combination of motifs could mean at the owners of these villas held an eclectic variety of religious beliefs, or at they were part of a sect (heretical to orthodox Christians) which did so, that they were Christians with a continuing love of classical pagan erature, or that they were employing images of pagan deities and heroes as legories of moral qualities, or simply that they had both bought their osaics from the same manufacturer, who used this combination of symbols a trademark. Neither the Hinton nor the Frampton mosaic seems to have en laid in a setting which could have been used for worship.[12] The only od evidence for a church or chapel in any of the scores of villas which ve now been excavated is at one of the finest maintained by English eritage, at Lullingstone beside the River Darent in northern Kent. There e plaster coating the walls of one room had been painted with two chi-rho mbols, and with figures standing with arms upraised in the manner of ristian prayer. The antechamber had another chi-rho and the Greek letters pha and omega, echoing the description of the Christian god in the Book of evelation. However, not only are these paintings, as yet, unique in Britain, t the nearest parallels in the entire Roman world come from Syria. rthermore, the chapel was constructed over another room which had been ed for a pagan cult of water nymphs, followed by one of ancestors or the men of the emperor. This was renovated in the mid fourth century, with e vessels for offerings renewed, which suggests that the pagan worship

ay have continued even while Christian services were conducted erhead.[13]

80 The mosaic floor from the villa at Hinton St Mary, Dorset, as reassembled in the British iseum. The head in the centre, with the Christian chi-rho symbol behind it, may well be Christ nself, or perhaps a Christian Roman emperor.

Dorothy Watts proposed in 1991 that a specifically Christian kind of metery could be identified in Roman Britain, characterized by the esence of infants as well as other age groups; whole bodies buried tended and on their backs; separate graves aligned so that the dead person uld sit up and face the east at the coming of the Last Judgement; and an sence of grave goods. Upon that basis a total of fourteen such cemeteries as proposed, most common in the West Country but also scattered across ast Anglia and the East Midlands: one, at Poundbury, by Dorchester, held er a thousand graves.[14] The problem with this checklist is that it certainly s what would be expected of Christian burial, but that its separate mponents, with the possible exception of infant graves, are also found in

ırial grounds which have been thought to be pagan: they were common shions in fourth-century Romano-Britain.[15] Moreover, the incidence of one and decapitated bodies increased in cemeteries as the fourth century ent on, though both practices were abhorrent to Christians.[16] Both oblems would be solved if the characteristics of a Christian grave were lopted by pagans because of Christian influence, and if Christians had flicted the prone and headless burials on individuals of whom they hemently disapproved; but neither solution is at present certain.[17] As for ıristian churches, not one has been securely identified on a Romano-itish site, though a score of possible examples have been noted in forts d towns and in former temple precincts, from Canterbury to Hadrian's all. The essential difficulty is that there was no plan, orientation or size at was particularly associated with a building dedicated to Christian orship at this period, and much of that worship may well have taken place people's homes.[18]

Some of the same problems attend personal objects as attend villa corations. Where the chi-rho symbol appears on them it may only be a mbol of imperial authority, and Christian and pagan motifs are sometimes und together: for example, in the fourth-century Mildenhall Treasure und in west Suffolk in 1942, three silver spoons bore the chi-rho but a ver dish was engraved with the god Bacchus and an oceanic deity. Indeed, ms decorated with Christian symbols or inscriptions have frequently been und deposited in watery places and pits, as if continuing the prehistoric gan rite of offering objects at such places.[19] By 1995 a total of seventy rtable items had been recorded from Roman Britain which bore clear idence of association with Christianity, and sixty which had a possible sociation. This is not a large percentage of the overall haul of small and ovable objects from the period, but the finds concerned were well stributed across what is now southern and eastern England, with an pecial concentration in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Kent and Suffolk, while ere are a few from the military zone of the north. Moreover, the texts and ustrations engraved on them exhibited a sophisticated kind of Christianity, ith a good knowledge of the Bible and of liturgy, and a full hierarchy of ficials.[20] It becomes easy to understand, in view of this evidence, how itain could have produced a first-rate theologian by the late fourth century,

elagius, even though his career is only recorded after he reached Italy where his ideas were eventually condemned as heretical). On the other nd, these finds still do nothing to disclose the relative popularity and scale the religion of Christ in the province. It is striking that not a single object s yet been dug up at London, the largest city in Britain and a major seat of overnment. The most significant large objects which seem to connect with ristianity are a set of (to date) twenty-eight circular lead tanks, some corated with Christian symbols. They are almost unique to Britain, and und mostly in East Anglia and the East Midlands, with a few outliers. aditionally, they have been interpreted as settings for baptism, and though ey are not large enough for a person to be immersed in them, it is possible at they contained the holy water used in the rite, or that the postulant stood side one and had the water poured over her or him.[21] Their very stinctiveness raises the question of whether they merely represented a itish innovation to implement a normal Christian rite, or whether they nbodied beliefs or practices peculiar to the province. Belinda Crerar has, wever, recently emphasized that only some have clearly Christian corations, and others may have functioned in industrial production, bath ating systems or pagan worship.[22] Put together, all these kinds of material nd argue for a Christian presence in both town and country over much of urth-century Roman Britain, and among a range of social classes; but the sue of its relative strength, and its nature or natures, is still not resolved.

One further means of approaching the problem is from the other side: an sessment of the strength or weakness of forms of paganism in the course the same century, if practicable, would effectively provide the answer to e status of Christianity. The crucial test here is that of the survival of pagan lt centres. The continued deposition of objects in natural places and at ehistoric monuments, which – to judge from the evidence of coins – deed went on until the very end of Roman rule, and probably beyond, is t sufficient evidence in itself. There is a chance that those carrying out ese acts were Christians who still sought to propitiate nature spirits at these ots in much the same way as their descendants in the British Isles left out od for fairies. If so, this would be important and significant in itself, but ere is no way of ascertaining whether it is true; and, as said, Christian jects were themselves left in earth and water and may represent a

ınslation of this practice to the new faith. The fate of temples and shrines a much more objective test of the fate of the old religion(s), and here there plenty of evidence. Buildings of pagan worship continued to flourish until e middle of the fourth century, though the complex of Cunomaglus at ettleton Shrub was replaced by a cross-shaped building which may have en a church. In the 360s Brean Down and another Somerset temple seem have ceased to function, but Nettleton Shrub reverted to pagan use (if that d ever ceased there) and a new pilgrimage shrine was constructed within e huge abandoned hill fort of Maiden Castle, with dedications to Diana d Minerva. At some point in the mid to late fourth century the precinct of ılis Minerva at Bath and a column dedicated to Jupiter at Cirencester were ficially restored after being damaged; but whether this damage was by ıristians or barbarian raiders is not known. Only from the 380s do temples erywhere fall into ruin: at Uley, for example, the buildings were molished, the cult statue of Mercury broken and the votive objects thrown ıt. At four West Country sites small buildings were erected in the former cred enclosures, which may have been Christian churches but also may ve been farms. At Uley a new building was installed which contained parent stone altars with no trace of pagan votive material, and so was ssibly a church; but the altars may not have been added until long after the d of imperial rule. However, to judge from coin deposition, Lydney, Bath, e shrine at Maiden Castle and other sites (up to fifteen in the south-east) ay have continued in some form of pagan worship up till the end of Roman le, and beyond it.[23]

81 A reconstruction, redrawn from that by Charles Thomas, of the decorative frieze from the lead k found at Walesby, Lincolnshire. It may be our only representation of Christian baptism from man Britain, showing a female postulant being brought to the ceremony by two Christian matrons, dressed for immersion in or sprinkling with the holy water. It could also, however, portray the gan goddess Venus, between two nymphs.

This pattern of decline, therefore, fits that of growing Christian tolerance of other religions during the final quarter of the century, ending complete proscription in the 390s. The problem with it is that the nescale also precisely fits a different, and even more relevant, ıenomenon: the collapse of Roman culture in Britain. In the early fourth ntury the province had reached the apex of its prosperity, especially in the untryside, but from the 340s, and even more from the 360s, periodic but rious raiding by Irish, northern British and Germanic war bands both srupted the economy and drove up the cost of defence to an ever more ıerous level. Round about 370 a tipping point was reached, after which onomic activity, and everything that depended on it, went into rapid and rminal decline. All the things that made Britain look Roman – towns, llas, local commerce, mass industrial production and heavy use of coinage were increasingly abandoned, and the process was complete within a cade or two of the end of imperial rule. It is small wonder that temples ared in the wreckage; and, significantly, none of the stone buildings which me have thought to have been Christian churches were erected in this riod of almost universal decay.[24] There are some signs that the andonment of the pagan holy places was accompanied by violence. Uley as one such case. The shrines of Mithras seem to have been attacked llectively in the early fourth century, and by some kind of official order as e cult statues were often broken while the buildings were preserved; save the fort above modern Caernarvon where the whole of one was burned d razed.[25] At Southwark and in Gloucestershire, broken statues of deities d other debris from demolished cult centres were dumped in wells, and any damaged bronze figures have been found in the Thames near the idge that served the Roman city of London. One was the severed head of a onumental statue of the deified emperor Hadrian, while limbs broken from her statues have been found in wells in the city. When the cult statue of ılis Minerva at Bath was destroyed, its head was cut off, slashed about the ce, and thrown into a sewer where it was found in 1727.[26] There is no dication of the date and circumstances attached to these acts. It is telling at the metal of which such artefacts was composed was intrinsically luable, and yet it was thrown away, as though used for an unclean rpose, instead of melted down. It remains possible that these acts were the

ork of barbarian raiders who mutilated items which they could not carry f; but it seems unlikely that London, at least, would have been captured by em and no trace of the act left in any records.

On the other hand, there is also evidence for peaceful coexistence of ligions in the province, especially on the curse tablets thrown into the cred spring at Bath. Some called down divine vengeance on offenders whether pagan or Christian', while the author of one actually identified mself as a Christian as he made his plea to the goddess of the spring.[27] It is ssible, as has been said, that some of the mixture of motifs from the fferent religions on personal objects and mosaics testifies to such a genial rtnership between them. The temple of Mithras at London collapsed turally in the first quarter of the fourth century, because of unstable undations, and its icons were buried in the floor. The building was not, wever, abandoned, and seems to have been converted to a new cult, obably of Bacchus, which ended with no sign of violence many years ter.[28] It has long been noted how fragmentary Romano-British religious atuary seems to be, compared with that from some other parts of the mpire, and this has been ascribed to the fury of Christian iconoclasm. owever, recently Ben Croxford has noted that the pieces were often buried a manner which suggests structured ritual deposits, and that they had been lled apart rather than hewn into bits. He has proposed that, as the temples ll into ruin with the economy, their cult figures were ceremonially smembered, with some parts retained as portable images or amulets until ey were reverently interred.[29]

82 The head of the cult statue of the goddess Sulis Minerva, which once stood in her temple at th. It had been hacked from the statue and then about the face, before being thrown into a sewer, l is now in the Roman Baths Museum.

In 2006 David Petts revisited the question of how Christian late Roman itain had been, and concluded simply that we don't know.[30] It seems hard dispute this verdict. Together with the ability to decide, at least as the idence stands, has been lost any knowledge of the experience and meaning conversion during the period, and its implications for the different ligious communities within the province. As so often in the story of cient British religion, such questions are amenable to a wide variety of dividual answers.

Evidence for Post-Roman Christianity

Modern scholarship has traditionally termed the early medieval period in itain 'the Dark Ages', an expression which gives a great deal of entirely derstandable offence to specialists in the history of the island from the

venth century onwards, of which a great deal is known. It also does a rther injustice to this later period, of applying a label which suggests rbarism and regression for the often highly creative, literate and culturally phisticated people who were active in it. For the years between 410 and 07 the second consideration is still relevant, but the first, alas, is not. Some nd of history exists for the whole of Roman Britain, in the sense that it is ssible to know who was ruling the empire of which it formed a part, and w, and to place the individuals commemorated in the province in a litical, administrative and social context. Buildings can also usually be ted, by the evidence of coins and sometimes of inscriptions, to within a rtion of a century. By contrast, for most of the two hundred years after the d of imperial rule, there is no real political, administrative or social story. The names of many individuals can be retrieved from it, especially m memorial stones, but virtually nothing can be known of their lives. It is perfect illustration of the extent of this problem that the most famous of all e figures traditionally associated with it, Arthur, may either have been one the greatest people in the story of Britain, or have had no historical istence at all.[31] The sudden absence of a money economy and the mass oduction of artefacts mean that material remains often cannot be assigned one century or another; and although it is likely that this situation will be proved by the recent developments in the modelling of radiocarbon dates, scussed with relevance to the Neolithic, their effects have as yet to be felt.

The lack of reliable and agreed history for the period is especially rious in the field of religious studies, because it leaves us without any derstanding of one of the pivotal changes in the nature of British religion. the end of Roman Britain, as explained, it seems likely that both ganism and Christianity still existed in the former province. When lequate information begins once more to be available, near the end of the xth century, the former Roman territory has been divided into half. The estern part is still occupied by the descendants of the colonial population, ho are now apparently all Christian. The eastern part seems once more to pagan, but honouring a new set of deities and rites derived from Germany d Scandinavia. What have apparently vanished, throughout, are all active rms of the kinds of paganism previously found in the large area of Britain ce ruled by Rome, both of those forms native to the island and those

ıported by settlers or visitors from other parts of the Roman Empire. No lid evidence survives to enable an understanding of how and why they sappeared, though the current scholarly consensus seems to be that they d so rapidly, before the end, or even by the middle, of the fifth century.[32]

This is a conclusion that is strongly indicated by the few sources that do rvive from the period. In Britain, that period is woefully lacking in the ree categories of written evidence which enable a modern person to track e progress of conversion in other parts of the former Western Roman npire: lives of saints composed relatively soon after their deaths; sermons d edicts of leading churchmen; and decrees of church councils. There are veral biographies of saints who operated in the former province in the fifth sixth centuries, but virtually all were written after the middle of the eventh century, and so are hardly reliable evidence for events in the age hich they describe; and, perhaps unsurprisingly in view of the time lag, ey provide little information on the process of conversion.[33] From the riod under consideration, just three witnesses survive. The first is a aulish Christian called Constantius of Lyon, who wrote a life of a saint om his province, Bishop Germanus of Auxerre. He probably did so in the 80s, describing events in the first half of the century, and his relevance here that those include two visits by Germanus to Britain. Both were on issionary work, to convert the inhabitants back to orthodox Christianity om the Pelagian heresy, and paganism is not mentioned as a problem, save the religion of the barbarians who are raiding the former province. At one oint Germanus conducts a mass baptism, but the reader is not told of hom; whether of pagans, heretics or just orthodox Christians who had not t taken up the custom of baptizing infants. Had the subjects of the act been ought into Christianity for the first time, it is strange that Constantius does ot mention the fact.[34] He certainly knew very little about Germanus's visits Britain, in comparison with his activities on the Continent, but the rpose of the first one is confirmed by a near contemporary. This is the aulish chronicler Prosper of Aquitane, who wrote only four years after the ent, which he dated to 429, with the information that it was indeed rected against Pelagianism.[35]

Our second witness is the most famous of all Irish saints, Patrick, whose etime cannot be dated but which is generally agreed to fall wholly or ainly within the fifth century. He left two letters, one of which contains an tobiographical sketch revealing a childhood in a western part of post-oman Britain which was, in his recollection, securely Christian. His father ld the lesser clerical office of deacon, while his grandfather had been a iest, and as a boy he had been made a deacon himself. He was captured by gan Irish raiders, thereby launching his career as the most famous issionary to Ireland, but while he is naturally much concerned with Irish ganism, he never mentions a surviving British counterpart. Instead, in all s references to Britain he assumes a dominant Christian religion with a full clesiastical hierarchy.[36] The third author is Gildas. It is not certain who he as or where he lived, and he may have existed at any time between 450 and 0, although more probably in the second half of that period. His purpose as to castigate for their sins the British clergy of his time, and five petty ngs, who ruled territories stretching from Cornwall to North Wales. What highly significant is that he never included paganism among the misdeeds the people whom he condemned, faulting them instead for moral offences ch as greed, worldliness, marital misconduct, the murder of political vals, and attacks on fellow Britons. Indeed, he explicitly considered ganism to be dead in his society, its memorials consisting only of the icons Romano-British deities, still visible within and without the ruined cities. e recalled that his compatriots had once worshipped divine powers herent in the natural world, but stated proudly that in his time they garded that world merely as created for the use of humans.[37]

It is possible to enter cautions against the impression conveyed by these xts. Constantius, as said, plainly knew little about Britain, and Germanus ay have been concerned only with a Christianized elite, and have ignored e mass of the inhabitants who could still have been pagan; it is interesting at he has curiously little to say about British church buildings or bishops, ough he gives prominence to the shrine of St Alban.[38] Patrick may have own up in a Christian enclave, and in his later dealings with fellow Britons mply not been interested in their problems with their own pagans. It is rder to present a counter-argument to the assumptions of Gildas, not least cause he was dealing with a large region of the former province which had

en one of the least Romanized and urbanized. Still, there may have been eas elsewhere with which he was less familiar in which the old religions ngered. None the less, when all of these doubts have been raised, it remains ue that the picture provided by the only contemporary writings which deal ith the religion of post-Roman Britain is a remarkably consistent one: that ganism had already lost its dominance there by the early fifth century, and as gone by the early sixth. It is notable that the early sixth century was also e time in which later authors located Arthur, and that the first of those to ention him, the ninth-century writer of the *Historia Brittonum*, portrayed m as a Christian warrior leading a Christian people against pagan vaders.[39]

On the whole, archaeology confirms the picture presented by the literary urces, in that if any pagan rites continued at the increasingly ruined mples by the beginning of the fifth century, they seem to have ceased at me point relatively early in it.[40] This impression may, however, be ceptive, because of the problems of interpretation and dating. The final andonment of the temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath has been put by fferent experts at various times between the fourth and the seventh nturies, because the evidence is so complex: six layers of sediment cumulation and repair are visible in what appear to be the late and post-oman levels. Radiocarbon dates for cattle bones now, however, suggest at the last attempt to repair the building was over by 430, and that soon ter then it was deliberately demolished, with great effort. No more coins ere put into the sacred spring after the late fourth century, although a late th-century brooch was added, perhaps as an accidental loss by a bather, or rhaps as one last gift from a devotee.[41] At Uley the front of the temple fell the late fourth century, and the surviving portion was apparently nverted into a smaller building, either a scaled-down pagan shrine or a urch. That was replaced, probably in the fifth century, by a large wooden ucture, from its shape and altars likely a church, which was succeeded in rn by a smaller stone one in the late sixth or early seventh century; after hich the site was abandoned. When that final stone building was erected, eces of the broken cult statue of Mercury were buried in the floor, the ndsome classical head being placed carefully outside the junction of the dy of the church and an apse.[42] Was this to venerate it, as a mixture of

gan and Christian loyalties; or to neutralize its pagan power; or because it d become mistaken for a representation of Christ or a saint? We cannot l.

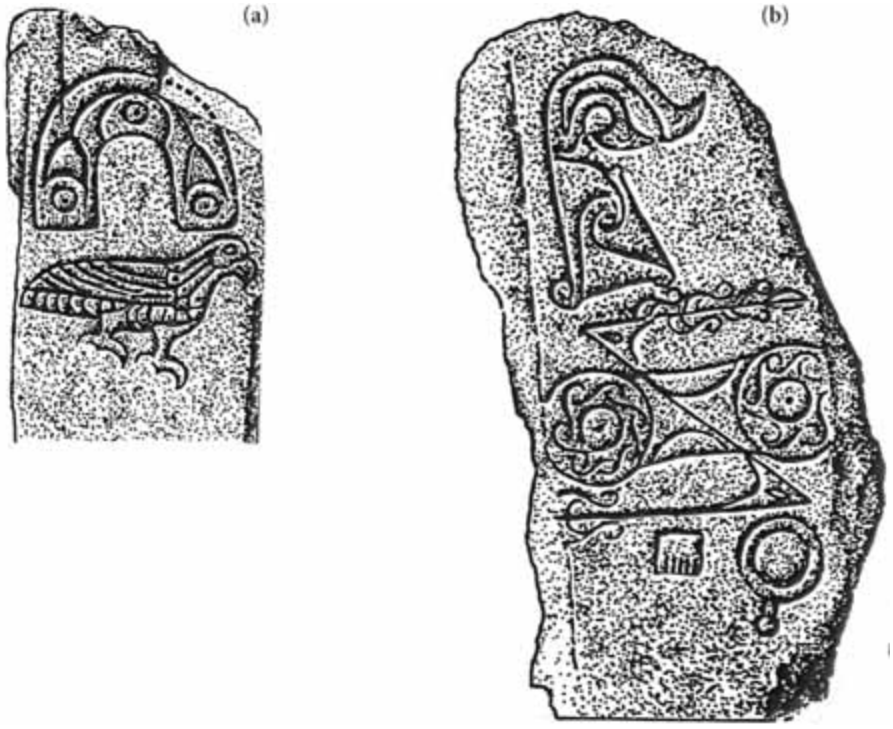
What is apparent is that British Christianity had already acquired enough nfidence and momentum to become a missionary religion by the fifth ntury. It was during that period that it was given a bridgehead into Ireland, the shape of Christian British slaves taken back to that country by raiding rties, as in the case of Patrick. The new religion seems to have become minant, or even universal, in Ireland by the mid sixth century, and from ere its adherents joined forces with British Christians to evangelize the rthern extremities of Britain itself.[43] By the beginning of the sixth century, e new religion had spread beyond the limits of the former Roman ovince; and at some time in that century, and probably an early one, it had ossed southern Scotland to reach the Forth–Clyde line. The evidence for is is archaeological: the appearance of engraved marker stones of the kind sociated with post-Roman Christianity in Wales and south-west Britain, d of cemeteries of unburnt burials, extending east to west, of the late mano-British kind. Later tradition gave a particular prominence in this gion to a saint called Nyniau, who became Ninian by the twelfth century. e is currently identified with a Briton named Uinniau, who also operated in eland where he was revered as Finnian, but became especially associated ith the community of Whithorn near the south-western Scottish coast. othing certain is known of him except his date, which the Irish connection n place in the early to mid sixth century.[44] This is too late to make him the angelist of southern Scotland, as tradition did, if the engraved stones nuinely predate this period. Whithorn, however, does seem to have been a ry early Christian site, to judge by the preservation there of a stone scribed with a sophisticated Christian statement in Latin, which has nerally been dated to the first half of the fifth century.[45]

To the north of the Forth and Clyde lived the Britons who had never en Romanized, even to the extent of being occupied for a generation or rned into client kingdoms. All through the centuries of imperial rule sewhere in the island, they had continued in a prehistoric Iron Age culture. om the end of the third century the Romans gave them a new collective

ckname, of ‘Picts’, meaning ‘painted people’. It probably referred to their bit of decorating their bodies, perhaps with tattoos, and summed up their rbarism, being at once redolent of contempt and fear. This was because the bes concerned had begun to raid the wealthy and vulnerable province to eir south, and continued to do so for about a century and a half, with creasingly serious effect. The name, however, stuck long after the raids d ceased, and by the end of the sixth century had come to have a more nited and important application. The inhabitants of Argyll and the uthern Hebrides were closely connected to Ireland, sharing a common cial, religious and political world with the kingdoms of Ulster and using e Irish (Gaelic) language; either because their area had actually been lonized by Irish invaders or because they had always belonged to the same nguistic and political zone.[46] They were given the Roman name for the sh, ‘Scots’, which they eventually bestowed of course, upon the whole of rthern Britain. The remaining British of the north, occupying the Northern les, northern Hebrides and the rest of the mainland, retained the nickname Picts, and developed a distinctive and striking identity of their own. It was pressed especially in the production of upright stone slabs, carved with a ndard repertoire of animal and abstract symbols which were later mbined with explicitly Christian imagery as the slabs became crosses. undreds of these stones survive, displaying their carvings in churchyards, road verges and in fields from Angus to Orkney.

During much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was a ong scholarly tradition that the Picts had been ethnically different from the st of the Iron Age British, with a separate language and the custom of heriting property and titles through the female rather than the male line. It as accordingly believed that they were an older race, perhaps descended rectly from the Neolithic inhabitants of Britain and preserving in their heritance traditions echoes of a former universal adherence of the very cient British (or Europeans, or humanity) to matriarchal rule. Much genuity was expended on attempts to crack the code governing the mbols on the stones, in the belief that to do so would provide a unique sight into a lost world of prehistoric thought and belief. From the 1980s, is complex of scholarly beliefs dissolved. The Pictish language was entified as merely a regional dialect of Iron Age British. The belief in

atrilineal inheritance proved to have been based on a credulous modern ading of just two sources. One was an origin myth, which was not mposed until around 700, and seems to have been developed to justify the ility of one Pictish king to claim a realm through the female line. The her was a single Pictish king-list, which was apparently not composed til after the origin myth. As for the symbols, no attempt to decode them s so far met with general agreement. What is certain is that the symbol nes seem to have developed during the fifth and sixth centuries, as the oples who adopted them separated off, culturally, from the Scots in Argyll d the rest of the British to the south. The royal centres which the Picts tablished in the same period tended to be associated with impressive onuments from prehistory, and especially the Neolithic, as if to root the w kingdoms, dynasties and ethnicity in the ancient past. This was a pattern so found in Ireland in the same period, and among the Scots, to whom, as ated, the Irish were linked.[47]



83 Pictish symbol stones. (a) The Eagle Stone at Strathpeffer, often taken as a prime example of simpler, and so presumably earlier, type. (b) The Dunnichen Stone, with more elaborate coration, and so thought to be later. Neither has any Christian iconography, and so both have often en assumed to belong to an earlier stage in the making of these stones.

The main question remaining from these discoveries is whether the mbol stones were a pre-Christian tradition which was subsequently linked Christianity, or a Christian tradition in themselves. If the first is true, then e stones would have been developed as a defiant pagan gesture in the face the approaching new religion, and were subsequently appropriated by it. ıe present answer is that the symbols seem to have predated conversion by short time: the earliest that can be dated is on a small stone reused in the ɔor of a settlement at Sanday, Orkney, around 500.[48] They also reproduce ɣles which were already present on the metalwork of the northernmost itish during the Roman period.[49] The erection of most of the carved slabs ems, however, significantly to post-date the adoption of Christianity. The ots of Argyll had converted to Christianity by the mid sixth century, as an parently integral part of the conversion of Ireland, with which they were closely associated. It was at that time that the most famous of all their ints settled among them: Colum, whose name was Latinized as Columba. e did not come from Ireland as a missionary, but an exile, and his task was itially to establish a network of monastic communities within Christian ottish territory, spreading out from the base which the local king gave him ı the isle whose Irish name was Latinized to Iona. He was not, moreover, e only Irish churchman to found an important religious centre in Scottish ritory at the time, as an independent one was established on another small and, Lismore, in the Firth of Lorne to the north. Another was founded ter at Applecross up on the coast of Wester Ross, in 673 by the Irishman aelrubha. Whether Columba conducted any actual missionary work mself, and where, is unclear, as the earliest account of his life, composed a time within living memory of it, claims that he preached in the Tay sin, while the most detailed and famous, written about a century after his ath, sends him to the Inverness region instead. So it looks as if he did erate among the Picts, but in which region, and whether the communities hich he visited were already converted, are difficult questions to answer.[50] ıter tradition preserved the names of actual Pictish saints, Drostan, echtan Ner and Servan, but no solid information on their careers.[51]

84 The full range of Pictish symbols as found engraved on the upright stone slabs and identified Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson.

It is at present impossible to say how and by whom the Picts were nverted, and whether the process was gradual or rapid, or easy or ntested. Around the opening of the seventh century another Irishman, onnán, established another large monastic community on the island of gg in the Central Hebrides. In 615–17 he and 150 followers were burned death there by attackers. This fact is recorded in early and generally liable Irish chronicles, along with the information that the killers went on ravage parts of Ireland. The atrocity on Eigg was therefore one act of a rge-scale raiding expedition, but the annals concerned do not identify the iders or their motive: centuries later, a story was developed to account for e event which takes the form of a personal revenge drama and does not cord with some of the details of the chronicle entries.[52] If Donnán and his ople were not slaughtered for religious reasons, then there is not a single liably attested case of a Christian being martyred for her or his faith by

gans in the whole of the British Isles throughout the period 312 to 800, in hich the conversion of most of the peoples of the archipelago took place. owever, our lack of information concerning the process, in virtually every gion, may caution against too ready and absolute a drawing of conclusions om that fact. Archaeology, once again, greatly enriches our sample of idence without making it much easier to fashion into a historic narrative; d the classic case in point here is Martin Carver's recent excavation of the ajor Pictish monastery at Portmahomack, sited at the end of the Tarbat eninsula on the Moray Firth. It seems to have been founded in episodes tween about 550 and 675, but there is no indication of how or by whom, d when in that period it became a fully functioning monastery. ortmahomack, evidently a very important Christian centre which produced urgical artefacts and books for daughter institutions, is itself apparently known to history.[53]

Before the end of the seventh century, the whole of the British Isles ems to have converted to Christianity, in the crude and external sense that was the official faith of every community. We shall probably never know hich was the last district to adopt it, though the balance of probability is at it was somewhere in the north of Scotland. On the map, the Northern les appear to be the most remote corner, but the sea lanes around Britain ean that they were almost certainly more receptive to new ideas than many aces in the interior of the mainland. Orkney may be a good case study with hich to close this survey. The late Iron Age and early medieval periods ere are characterized by rectangular burial cairns orientated east to west, hich may be pagan or Christian. There are also some small round or oval uildings without domestic features or artefacts which could be the first urches, or pagan shrines. Not only is any certainty of religious association cking for all these material remains, moreover, but so is any certainty of te. As a result, although Christianity probably reached the islands in the xth or seventh century, there is no reliable textual or archaeological idence for it there until the eighth.[54] This kind of vagueness sums up most our knowledge of the conversion of western Britain and Ireland to the w religion, and of the end of official adherence to paganism there: we lack istory of it.

It may be worth emphasizing here that there are still some positive things be said about the subject. The very paucity of reliable data and terpretation means that different historians are free to put together their vn stories, filling the gaps with their imagination and personal choices and ith material selected from the work of later medieval authors of histories d saints' lives, who purported to provide the information missing from the rlier surviving sources, and may in some cases actually have been doing .[55] It is also important not to miss the fact that, while the details are mostly cking, the main features of these areas of the British Isles are clear. Their loption of a Roman religion was one aspect of a process by which they, ving lain either at the margins of the imperial province or outside it ogether, finally Romanized. They did so on their own terms, once the my that had guarded the province was gone and the frontier had dissolved. ristianity arrived as part of a package, which included literacy (in Latin as ell as the local vernacular), a closer cultural and personal connection with e Mediterranean world, technological improvements in industry and riculture, and the formation of larger political units. Its basic beliefs, its set holy writings, its organizational structure and its framework of remonies remained standard, and by the end of the eighth century (and ually long before) all parts of the archipelago were to some extent part of a pranational Church. Even so, and especially in the first stages of laptation to the new religion, different regions were able to develop dividual emphases and idiosyncrasies in their employment of texts and loption of ritual. They were also able to choose between modes of local ligious leadership which were dominated by bishops, monasteries and cular rulers, or rather (and most of the time) make different relationships tween those three.[56] They were able in the process to create strikingly fferent expressions of religious culture, the Picts for example rejecting oman forms of literature, art and monument, although they eventually nbraced the doctrinally Roman form of Christianity, and preferring stinctive alternatives such as the symbol stones.[57] The Christianity of rth-eastern Britain, therefore, looked as different from that of the south, in me ways, as its paganism had done from that of the Roman province four five hundred years before.

Adventus Saxonum

As stated above, in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, native ganism disappeared in the eastern half of the former Roman province as ell; but so did Christianity, both being replaced by a new kind of paganism, nported from German and Scandinavian lands. This was, of course, one nportant aspect of the phenomenon by which Romano-British culture was cceeded in this broad region by the Anglo-Saxon, as the crucial velopment which was to lead to the creation of the nation and identity of e English. A number of ancient and medieval texts, now long familiar to holars, provide between them an account of how this occurred. Two, onstantius and Gildas, have already been cited: the others are a Gaulish ronicle, the main Anglo-Saxon one, the English historian Bede, and the elsh *Historia Brittonum*. Although the product of three different cultures, e story that they tell between them is remarkably coherent and sustained, an invasion by foreign war chiefs, leading shiploads of followers, who rmed a spearhead for a mass movement of incoming peoples. It is a amatic and traumatic narrative, of the violent dispossession of the post-oman British of what proved in the end to be most of their land, marked by ttles and the taking of towns and fortresses. It is true that some of these urces were compiled so long after the events concerned that their authors d to rely on traditions and texts handed on to them, of varying and often oubtful quality: the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was commenced in the late venth century (and its Dark Age material may have been inserted later), ede wrote in the early eighth, and the *Historia Brittonum* was not compiled til the ninth. Some of the information conveyed is obviously invented: otoriously, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* derives the names of Portsmouth d the Isle of Wight from those of their Saxon conquerors, when they ainly come from Roman originals.[58] On the other hand, there are balancing oments of attractive precision, such as the same chronicle's entry under the ar 491 of the storming of the massive Roman coastal fortress of Pevensey Sussex, given its correct Roman name. Furthermore, the Gaulish ronicle was almost contemporary to the relevant developments that it cords (though with frustrating brevity), while Gildas's parents would have ved through the most intense part of the struggle between Britons and nglo-Saxons that he records.

During the nineteenth century several prominent English historians entified passionately with the Anglo-Saxons as the ancestors both of their ce and of all that was most noble in its national character and hievements.[59] They, and their colleagues, still disagreed profoundly over w much the conquest had consisted of acts of genuine ethnic cleansing, d how much it had absorbed large numbers of the British and habituated em to the ways and beliefs of the newcomers. By the 1920s and 1930s, so, doubts were frequently being expressed concerning the reliability of uch of the written evidence for the process. None the less, there remained dominant view that the arrival of the English (the ‘Adventus Saxonum’ in ede’s phrase) had consisted of a series of military campaigns associated ith a mass movement of settlers from Germany and Jutland.[60] This ubtless derived much of its force, for some authors at least, from the rsistence of the late Victorian preoccupation with race and invasion as the incipal forces for change in prehistory and early history, discussed earlier the present book. It was also, however, rooted in the available texts and in e apparent message of archaeology, as a Germanic culture became the minant, or indeed the only visible, one across most of eastern England uring the period concerned.

This view began to erode from the 1950s onward, as new archaeological chniques uncovered evidence which seemed seriously at odds with it. erial photography and landscape archaeology revealed that there had been dramatic change in land use between Roman and Anglo-Saxon times, hile the written evidence of charters suggested that some estates had been ssed on intact from one period to the other. Field and enclosure systems in ent and East Anglia, areas which were supposed to have been conquered st by the English, showed continuity from the Iron Age to the Middle ges, and would have depended on hedges which needed regular aintenance. No fifth- or sixth-century cemetery contained bodies showing tensive evidence of violence.[61] None of this accorded well with a large-ale and brutal replacement of the native population, and the discrepancy as magnified when genetics added its contribution to the database. An nglo-Saxon incursion was more or less invisible in matrilineal DNA, and ough it was more apparent in male sequences, it was hard to disentangle e early English strain from that of later medieval settlement by Germanic

d Scandinavian peoples such as the Vikings. The possible influx of male nglo-Saxons varied from a maximum of 20 per cent in East Anglia, 15 per nt in the North and East Midlands and 10 per cent in the south, to a inimum of 9 per cent in East Anglia and still lower totals elsewhere, aking up an average of 5.5 per cent in England as a whole.[62] If the picture inted by the literary sources matched up to any kind of reality, the nquest would apparently have taken the form of an invasion by war bands hich drove out or destroyed native British elites and took over the mass of e native population intact, to exploit it economically and impose their own lture, including their religion, upon it.[63]

The trouble with this otherwise neat explanation is that there is actually evidence for a well-defined military elite, or any other kind of distinctive ite, in the early Anglo-Saxon settlement record. A possible further means escape from this set of contradictions is to imagine a limited settlement of e eastern parts of the former province by Germanic farmers who coexisted ith a larger but demoralized British population and converted it to a new lture suited to different times.[64] An extreme version of this hypothesis, vocated by a few scholars, is to discount the importance of a movement of oples more or less completely, holding that it did not occur to a greater tent than in periods before or after, and to emphasize instead the illingness of British natives in the east to adopt Germanic ideas and tefacts for themselves.[65] To do this, of course, is to throw overboard the xtual evidence and rely entirely upon that of archaeology and genetics.

If genetics and landscape studies indicate a basic continuity of pulation all over Britain, however, linguistic studies do not.[66] Old English placed both the main languages of Roman-Britain – the native Celtic one d the official Latin one – completely in the areas that later became ngland. It did so, moreover, while taking on virtually no loanwords from her tongue. The areas most readily settled by invaders from the Continent he south-east, East Anglia and the East Midlands) did not contain a hybrid lture in the late fifth and the sixth centuries, but a thoroughly Germanic e. The latter may have produced artefacts in strongly marked local styles, hich showed some Roman influences at times and were deposited in eater quantity and value than was usual in the Continental homelands of

ngles and Saxons; but these goods still derived unmistakably from ermanic and Scandinavian originals, as did the form of the houses of the vners. The burial rites were mostly unlike those of either late Romano-itish Christians or pagans, and included the reintroduction of cremation, a actice abhorrent to Christianity, on a large scale. Romano-British meteries very rarely contained Anglo-Saxon graves, even when the latter isted in the same neighbourhood.[67] If there were native Britons in the stern and south-eastern parts of the former province by the end of the fifth ntury, then they seem archaeologically invisible to most experts. A ntinuity of occupation of the same land was therefore accompanied by an solute and abrupt discontinuity of language and culture, with no nsitional period visible by which Roman Britons turned into Anglo-xons.[68] Such a discontinuity is commonly the hallmark of genocide, mething which the evidence of the genes, bones and landscapes seem to ve ruled out. Furthermore, those authors who have preferred that evidence the testimony of the written sources, such as Gildas, have not so much plained the discrepancy of that testimony as disregarded it. What all of the erary texts which refer to the period embody, from the fifth to the ninth ntury, is an acute ethnic hostility between Britons and Anglo-Saxons. rthermore, absolutely none describe any of the latter as former natives ho had taken on foreign trappings: they are always characterized as vaders. Even in the late seventh century, when both were Christian, nglish kings who captured land from British rulers would still drive the tive clergy off it and transfer the latter's endowments to their own urchmen; something that they did not do when warring against other nglo-Saxon kingdoms.[69] Furthermore, Brittany, the westernmost peninsula Gaul, was given its enduring character in the post-Roman period by being avily settled by British refugees, the presence of whom would have been explicable had they not fled from a disaster at home. The genetic data ould not be discounted, but it may be misleading. After all, the Norman nquest, which is securely historically recorded and had dramatic political, cial and cultural consequences for England, is genetically invisible.[70] If e relied on the evidence of DNA and archaeology alone for a knowledge of eventh-century England, it would be possible to mount a very plausible gument that the Anglo-Saxons had simply imported Continental fashions

ı a huge scale in the 1060s and 1070s, and to point out that this was esaged in trends of cultural change already discernible in previous cades.

Considering possible answers to this critical issue of conflicting idence, Nicholas Higham remarked in 1994 that ‘it has become obvious at archaeologists are capable of producing an almost infinite succession of odels, each of which is more or less incapable of either proof or futation’.[71] This situation has not altered very much since. It is worth ıphasizing also, in view of the number of times in this book at which a urality of explanations for the same evidence has been suggested as ssible, what an extreme state of affairs this one actually is. When the storical evidence for other conquests and occupations of parts of Britain in e ancient and medieval periods – the Roman, Viking and Norman – is mpared with the archaeological, it makes a reasonably good match. There e arguments over whether the material data corroborates the textual and ıguistic with regard to particular events and people, and the cultural ıplications of what occurred, but in general the two different kinds of urce are compatible. In the case of the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, the o are at present bewilderingly adrift, and lost in the gap is the reality of hat happened to Romano-British religions in eastern Britain.[72]

Anglo-Saxon Paganism: The Written Evidence

As long as they remained pagan, the Anglo-Saxons were illiterate, and by definition all the textual evidence for their religion is retrospective. It also fragmentary and incidental, for after they converted none of them ere interested in preserving a full portrait of their former beliefs and actices. Enough scraps of information survive to enable some such picture be reconstructed, but for lack of any fresh written data that remains very uch now the one assembled by the late nineteenth century. Indeed, much of e scholarship carried out since the middle of the twentieth has served to ise doubts concerning the utility of some of the traditional literary and ıguistic material as a source for the matter. None the less, there remains asonable certainty about some aspects of the religious system or systems the pre-Christian English.

It is clear, for example, that like the great majority of other pagans they lieved in a range of deities, and the names of some of those survive. The ost important was Woden, who occurs most frequently both in place mes, scattered across southern and midland England, and in royal nealogies, all but two of which feature him as an ancestor. He was given e day of week associated by the Romans with Mercury, god of travel, mmerce and communication, and linguistically and in his attributes is early the English equivalent of the German Wotan and the Scandinavian din or Othin. This would make him a patron of rulers, wisdom, voyages d skills. A verse homily of the tenth century, indeed, calls him king of the ities and a cunning deceiver, at home on hills and at crossroads. A charm lls him an enchanter. The place name evidence gives second place to unor, who indeed features as more important in parts of southern England ch as Essex. He got the day dedicated by the Romans to Jupiter, to whom e homily explicitly compares him. In name and character he equates to the candinavian Thor, German Donner and Rhenish Taranis, and all these rallels plainly make him a god of storms and rainfall, and (so) of farming. is symbols were the hammer, found as miniatures in graves, and the vastika, carved on cremation urns: they apparently stood for thunder and underbolts, respectively. A lesser but still broad scatter of place names dicates the presence of Tiw, who must have been a war god because he as given the day allotted by Romans to Mars (Tuesday), while the T-rune, symbol with which he was apparently associated, was carved on weapons well as urns. Finally, the goddess Frigg was given the day of the Roman enus (Friday), and so presumably equates with her, and the Scandinavian eya, as a patroness of love, passion, sexual satisfaction and abundance: she ems to feature in one place name, in Derbyshire. In addition to these there e faint traces of other divinities. The kings of Essex traced descent from a fferent god, Seaxnet, and a runic poem mentions one called Ing. Asser, the ographer of Alfred the Great, speaks of Geat, and Bede mentions two ddesses, Hretha and Eostre, associated with spring.[73]

There are difficulties attached to most of this information. Swastikas are und on cremation urns across a much greater area than place names which parently commemorate Thunor, so may not be strictly associated with m; likewise there is no proven consistency of connection between the T-

ne and Tiw.[74] Some of the names that could derive from Thunor might ually well come from later Viking settlers whose names had the prefix hor' or 'Thur'.[75] These names of deities seem generally to be attached to tural places and prehistoric monuments, rather than to those of human use d habitation, raising the possibility that by the time that the attachment as made, the divinities had shrunk under Christian influence into demons, osts or legendary human figures, rather than actually being worshipped at ose spots. Certainly Woden features in the royal genealogies as a scendant of Noah. How far he can be understood simply by comparison th the much better recorded Scandinavian Odin is a difficult matter. Odin, take one instance, is one-eyed, having sacrificed the other in a successful est of wisdom, while Woden, as portrayed in Anglo-Saxon genealogies, s both eyes: so they cannot have shared exactly the same mythology.[76] arious scholars have cast doubt on Bede's two goddesses, as they are entioned nowhere else, and the source of his information is unknown. He eaks of them only because of his belief that the Anglo-Saxon months uivalent to March and April, Hrethmonath and Eosturmonath, were named ter them, while linguistically the former could simply be 'the loud month' ecause of its winds) and the latter 'the opening month' (because of its aves). R. I. Page, for example, calls the goddess Eostre 'an etymological ntasy' of Bede's, while being no kinder to his identification of Hretha, and lded that Bede's explanations for place names are sometimes definitely istaken.[77]

There is also a larger problem attached to our knowledge of Anglo-xon deities. As has been described, the inscriptions of Roman Britain veal an abundance of local goddesses and gods, as do those of the Western oman Empire in general. Ancient Greece and the Near East had in most of corded history more limited pantheons of a dozen or so major deities, rticular to each major cultural area and often in a family or political lationship. These were, however, assembled early in the historic period om a much larger number of local divinities, as part of the construction of ates and alliances between them: the enormous total of goddesses and gods iginally honoured in Sumer was noted in a previous chapter, and the ocess of assemblage and reduction of divine figures to pantheons has been udied elsewhere.[78] In Ireland the medieval epics similarly contain a small

ımber of deities, gathered under a king in the Mesopotamian and Greek anner, the Túatha Dé Danann; this model was almost certainly taken by the sh from the Greek and Roman literature with which they became familiar. ıe collections of medieval Irish place name lore contain, however, the ımes of several goddesses and some gods who do not feature in the stories. ıey therefore begin to look very similar to the Iron Age British, as revealed the Roman gift of writing, and had the pagan Irish left inscriptions to eir divinities then still more of the latter would probably come to light. ıis all makes the relatively small number of Germanic and Scandinavian ities recorded in the medieval sources look anomalous. It is telling that ıcitus, in his short account of first-century Germany, mentioned some as orshipped there who are apparently not found in the medieval texts, unless uch transformed. There is thus at least a possibility that the Anglo-Saxons itially honoured many more divine figures whose names have been lost: ıless they are concealed in those of settlements, usually thought to ımmemorate human landowners, just as lost Scandinavian deities may be dden in names in medieval Norse verse which are usually treated as poetic ubles for the well-known figures from the standard divine pantheon.[79]

Place names also provide some evidence for holy places.[80] *Hearg* has en taken to indicate a place on a hill, and one rendering of it into modern ıglish is Harrow. The Harrow on the Hill which is now in the north-estern suburbs of London, and is the site of the famous school, features in rly legal documents as the *hearg* of the Gumenings, a Middle Saxon ople. The hill concerned still rises impressively above the surrounding nd. So does that at Harrow in Sussex, where a dump of a thousand ox ulls has been found, presumably the remains of sacrificed animals. Ten her places with the *hearg* root have been identified, in the East Midlands, ıst Anglia and the south-east. *Weoh*, by contrast, has been taken as eaning a sacred site on any kind of ground, and sixteen place names ıbodying the word have been identified, scattered across the midland and uthern counties of England, especially near roads. Sarah Semple has found at three *hearg* sites were places of extended former ceremonial activity, pecially in the Romano-British period: they include the Sussex Harrow, here the ox skulls seem to date from that earlier age. Though this does not cessarily mean that the Anglo-Saxons did not carry on worship there, in

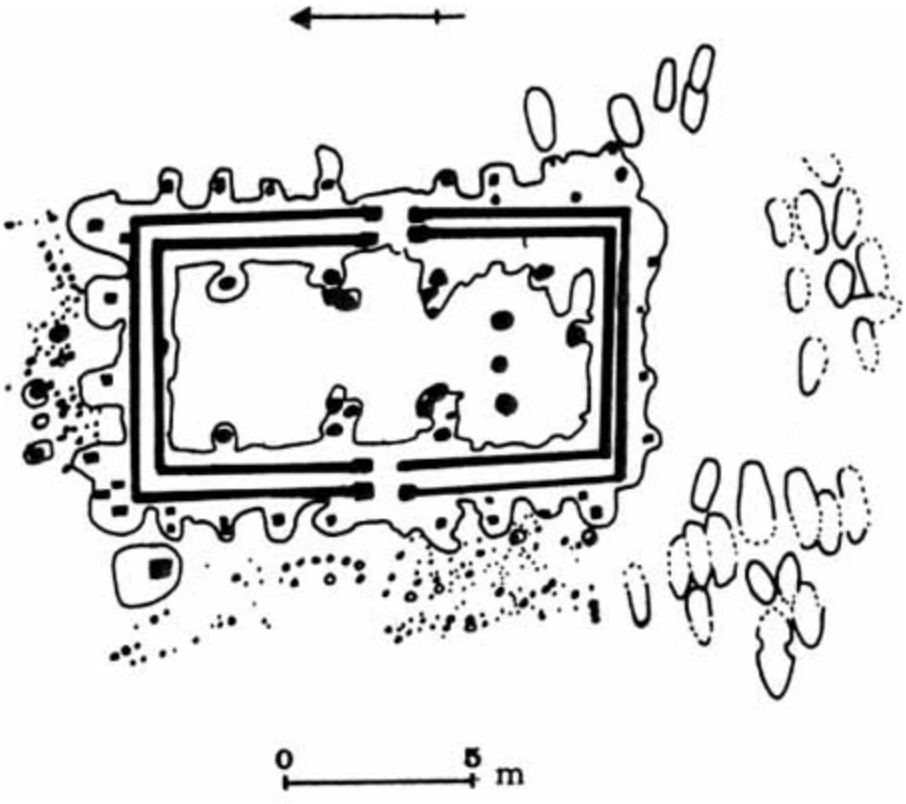
rn it does away with the idea that the word refers purely to a pagan English ly place.[81] Indeed no Anglo-Saxon temple or shrine has yet been securely entified anywhere, and by the 1990s many archaeologists had come to ubt their existence.[82] The Roman historian Tacitus had spoken of the rmanic peoples in general as preferring to worship in natural groves of es, and John Blair has noted that many early English place names suggest ossible veneration of trees, posts, pillars and mounds.[83] Sarah Semple has inted out that the evidence of names and ecclesiastical decrees suggests at the supernatural was associated with such a wide array of natural atures that the whole landscape appeared sacred to some extent.[84] This ing so, *hearg* and *weoh* may also have referred to sites of special sanctity th no human structures on them at all.[85]

Of actual buildings, the best candidate for a temple to date is at avering in the Cheviot Hills of Northumberland, a seat of the seventh-ntury kings of Northumbria. Within the palace complex was a large ooden rectangular building, with a pit beside it full of animal bones, almost l of oxen. It showed no sign of domestic use, but neither were there traces any altars or votive offerings inside. Three posts had stood near the uthern end, five more in a fenced enclosure outside, and another huge one the north-west: perhaps they were carved with symbols or as deities, or ng with trophies, though some at least might also have been Christian osses put up after the conversion of the kingdom. The whole structure had en burned, as if by Christians immolating one centre of a rival religion; t the bones may have been the remains of royal feasts, and the destruction act of war or merely an accident. Another possible Anglo-Saxon shrine s been excavated at Blacklow Hill in Warwickshire, and three others have en proposed in other parts of England. It may well be significant that all em to date from the late sixth or the seventh century, at the end of the gan period in England, when followers of the old religion may have been arting to construct special places of worship in rivalry with Christian urches, or in imitation of Iron Age or Romano-British shrines.[86] Certainly o of the most enduringly famous figures concerned with the conversion of e English, Pope Gregory the Great who ordered it and Bede, who wrote its story, both spoke of the existence of pagan temples. It may be objected at Gregory never went near England, while Bede wrote in the next

neration or two after paganism had officially disappeared. Being based in monastery near Hadrian's Wall, Bede could, indeed, have been misled by e ruins of Romano-British holy places in his neighbourhood.[87] There is, wever, no indication that he suffered from any such confusion. On the ntrary, he spoke of the former site of one of the main temples of the glish kingdom of Northumbria as still being shown to visitors in his own etime, while he had spoken to a man who had seen an actual one of an st Anglian king.[88] In the 670s a leading abbot, Aldhelm, rejoiced that here once the crude pillars of the same foul snake and the stag were orshipped … in profane shrines', monasteries and churches were now ilt.[89] This has sometimes been read as good evidence for serpent- and g-worship in Anglo-Saxon temples with sacred pillars. The 'foul snake', wever, is here a euphemism for the Devil, so this might mean any pagan age, while there are no other certain references to a stag cult in Anglo-xon England. Aldhelm may indeed have been referring to the ruins of a omano-British temple with a stag-antlered god depicted there; his onastery of Malmesbury was not far from the remains of Roman rencester (where such a god was carved), Bath and Nettleton. On the other nd, the mention of pillars brings to mind those posts at Yeavering. Perhaps e most reasonable conclusion is that there is some quite good textual idence for temples and shrines in seventh-century England, but that chaeology has yet to identify these securely.

Bede also spoke of his people as having had idols, by which he meant ages of their deities. In this they would, again, have been similar to other gans, but presumably the statues and carvings concerned were of wood d would have rotted away even if they were not burned by zealous ristians. The only places where they would have been preserved were gs and gravel terraces, and none have yet been found there; but then fewer an two dozen such timber images have been recovered from the whole of itish prehistory, and not all of those may have religious significance. Bede entions his pagan forebears as having priests, and indeed refers ecifically to a high priest for his own kingdom, of Northumbria. This dividual was prohibited by his office from riding a stallion or bearing eapons, a system of taboo which accords well with similar ritual strictions placed on the leading priest at Rome and (at least in legend) on

sh kings.[90] Another such figure features in the Life of the Northumbrian int Wilfrid, which records that when its hero and his companions were ipwrecked on the coast of Sussex, local pagans attacked them in order to eal their possessions, while the ‘chief priest’ of the locality cursed ilfrid’s people from the top of a mound, to aid the attack.[91] This account as written only a decade after the death of Wilfrid, by a monk of his abbey ho should have known him personally. Textual sources similarly have a w traces of pre-Christian belief. There are references to divination and the king of omens, which are easily to be believed because all ancient societies which we have knowledge shared this interest. An early eighth-century xt tells of how the whole retinue of a pagan Northumbrian king halted cause a crow cawed from an unlucky section of the sky.[92] Bede has a mous story of how a councillor of the Northumbrian king Edwin, faced ith the Christian message, compared the pagan view of life to the perience of a sparrow flying through a feasting hall from one door to other on a winter night, and so experiencing a brief moment of warmth d light before returning to the dark and cold. The main point of the ecdote was that pagan Anglo-Saxons, unlike Christians, did not claim any rtain knowledge of what follows death; which would accord with the riety of their burial rites, shortly to be considered. It has often been nsidered, also, that Anglo-Saxon literature, long after the adoption of ristianity, displays an unusually heavy emphasis on the working of a edestined fate, known as *wyrd*, in human affairs, which may be a carry- er from native paganism.[93]



85 The structure at Yeavering which has been identified as a possible pagan Anglo-Saxon temple. e line of three posts in the interior is clearly picked out, as are those outside the northern end and big one outside the north-western corner.

Again, it is possible to point out problems in this material. No bodies in nglo-Saxon graves have been securely identified as having any trappings pick them out as priests, though one at Yeavering had what may have en a standard or staff which might have served as one.[94] If it is a standard, wever, the man in the grave may just have been its bearer. More nvincingly, a number of female burials, with collections of small objects no obvious practical or decorative use, have been identified as possible nning women, sorceresses or female shamans.[95] The story of the fight on e Sussex coast goes on to relate how the pagan high priest was killed arvellously by a flung stone, in the manner of David slaying Goliath, and e whole altercation is compared to Gideon's exploits. The portrayal of the isode is therefore heavily influenced by biblical models, and it is hard to ow how far even eyewitnesses coloured their memories in accordance th a desire to emulate those. With a greater lag in reportage the problem of liability increases. The story of the crow's effect on the royal retinue took

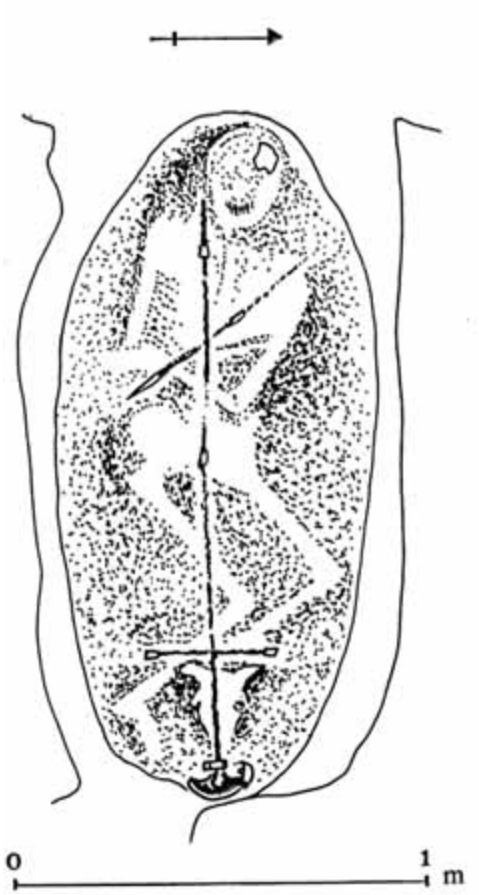
ace, on the admission of the author who recorded it, ‘long before the days any of those who are still alive’. It was of course told to make a polemical oint, of how a Christian missionary had the bird shot to show the power of s god over the forces of nature, and the folly of pagan forms of vination.[96] On the other hand, many pagan Europeans did divine the future om the cries and flight of birds.[97] Bede’s accounts of the high priest of orthumbria and of the simile of the sparrow in the hall derived from a time er a hundred years before he wrote it. He quite carefully identified both formation which he had received from eyewitnesses of events or from ople who had spoken to those. He makes no such claim to either source in is case, so this pair of stories would have come to him through a mmunal spoken tradition of unknown reliability. Richard North has ggested, in fact, that Bede’s account of the actions and taboos of the high iest might have been concocted by somebody using various literary and lkloric motifs.[98] S. D. Church has noted that it echoes the account of the nversion of the Frankish king Clovis, given in an earlier text by Gregory Tours.[99] On the other hand, the metaphor of the bird in the hall is a edible one, even if it is not provable. Linguistic evidence strongly suggests at the Germanic paganism of which the Anglo-Saxon was an offshoot aced a much heavier emphasis on ritual acts than on beliefs concerning the ture of the cosmos and the fate of the soul: all early Germanic languages ve many words for precise ceremonial actions, rather than for smological concepts.[100] As for *wyrd*, a number of scholars have argued at it was an abstraction drawn from Christian, rather than pagan, sources, d especially the sixth-century Italian writer Boethius.[101]

Bede also provided a sketch of the pagan English calendar, identifying x festivals in particular.[102] One was at the winter solstice, which he termed Modranect’, the ‘Mothers’ Night’, and said that it opened the New Year. he month of February was given the name of Solmonath, ‘Cake Month’, cause (he added) people baked cakes then and offered them to deities. ptember was ‘Halegmonath’, ‘Holy Month’, indicating a focus of rites en, perhaps to close the harvest season. November was ‘Blotmonath’, lood Month’, and here Bede was explicit that this was because of the nual slaughter of fattened livestock before winter set in, with a dedication the lives of the animals to deities: one naturally thinks here of the ox

ulls at Harrow and Yeavering. In addition there were the spring months, d feasts, of Hrethmonath and Eosturmonath, discussed above. There is no gn that Bede knew what rites had been carried out at these festivals, or hether his interpretation of the names of the months was a well-informed ıe: according to linguists, his derivation of Solmonath from ‘cake’ does not ork.[103] Even so, there is nothing inherently unlikely about his basic formation, because northern European peoples in general, including the hers in the British Isles, tended to hold festivities at these times of year. ıe main problem with Bede’s commentary is, indeed, that it is incomplete it stands: it is barely possible that the Anglo-Saxons would not have held festival to mark the summer solstice as well, because – again – northern ıropeans in general have done so since the beginning of recorded time.[104]

The most famous single piece of early English literature is *Beowulf*, hich is also the longest poem surviving in the Old English language and deed the longest in any vernacular language of Western Europe from fore the twelfth century. It is set in Scandinavia in pre-Christian times, but y attempt to define its relationship with historic pagan beliefs and actices is vitiated by a lack of context: after two hundred years of intense ıdy, experts still cannot agree on when, where, for whom, or by whom, it as written. What is now consensual is that it is in essence a Christian work, ther than a pagan one later given a Christian veneer.[105] There are indeed ndamental traits of the text which make such a conclusion easy to draw. ırist is never mentioned because he is treated as not yet having arrived, ther to the people concerned or on earth at all; but the Christian god is still ry much in charge. The work’s pagan heroes believe in a single true deity, ho created the whole world and sent a great flood to destroy sinners in it, ho ordains whatever happens in it, and whose adversary, who tempts ımanity, is the Devil. Bad pagans, in the story, worship the latter and crifice to him in heathen shrines, but good pagans do not. They are clearly oto-Christians, just waiting to receive the Christian message.[106] This akes it the harder – indeed at the present time apparently impossible – to termine to what extent the trappings of paganism portrayed in the poem, ch as the cremation funerals and the symbolic decorations of armour, were e result of accurately remembered tradition, or imagination, or

trapolation from the observed remains of old burials and hoards, sinterred in Christian times.[107]



86 The burial at Yeavering with a possible staff, which may indicate that the person interred there s a priestly figure.

Inevitably, the recent vogue for regarding shamanism as the key to the derstanding of all ancient religion in northern Europe has affected Anglo-xon studies, being given an application to early English poetry by the merican scholar Stephen Glosecki.[108] He has taken care to make a more reful than usual study of the phenomenon as portrayed in anthropology, d an accordingly more precise definition of what a shaman is. His shaman a specialist practitioner who inhabits a natural world which teems with irits, and works with some of those spirits as allies and helpers. This rson communicates with those spirits by entering a trance which allows r or his spirit to go forth into other dimensions and work there to help her humans, most often by healing them. Entry into this practice is secured

r training and initiation, a process which often involves vivid and traumatic iritual experiences. Such a definition certainly accords well with the lassic' shamanism of Siberia and the adjoining regions of Europe and sia, which supplied the Western world with the word 'shaman' and the iginal set of characteristics attached to it. Glosecki finds possible ferences to all aspects of his defining traits in different passages of Anglo-ıxon poetry and images from artwork of the period. The essential problem ith his interpretations is that they cannot be proved and all are doubtful, aving readers to find more or less plausibility in them. Classic shamanism the Siberian kind certainly existed in Europe, and indeed across much of cient Scandinavia, among the Sámi or Lapps. It also appears in Old Norse erature, plainly identified with the Sámi, but with certain traits of it taken by the Norse themselves to produce a hybrid kind of magical tradition.[109] hat is so striking about Anglo-Saxon literature, in this respect, is its total ck of the portraits of shamanic workings of the classical sort, or of actices clearly related to or derived from them, which appear so plainly in e Norse texts. This is why Glosecki had to resort to finding oblique ferences in passages and images which could easily bear very different eanings. It was an enterprise which was probably worth undertaking, but ems inevitably to have an inconclusive end.

One further kind of textual evidence needs to be considered: that of the nes, the script used by early medieval Germanic and Scandinavian oples. Its symbols were long thought by scholars to have possessed trinsically magical qualities, but recent authors have been dismissive of is idea. Christine Fell has denied that there was any native English runic agical tradition, while R. I. Page has called the idea of runes as a magical ript 'outdated and nonsensical'. On the other hand, Page allows that the gns could be used for magic, and Fell that Scandinavians, at least, did so e them. Page also leaves open the question of whether people who derstood the script, 'rune-masters', had a special status in society. Both ll and C. J. Arnold have emphasized that both pagans and Christians used e script, and so it had no special association with the older religions, while rnold notes that the signs are found on different sorts of Anglo-Saxon ave good but without any context that would allow their significance there be understood now. They may or may not refer to specific deities, as said

ove, and some were put on to the objects concerned when they were ade, so may have had no relevance to the grave.[110] While all this seems to t paid to the notion of an inherently numinous, definitively pagan, script, association between runes and supernatural qualities and purposes in gland, at particular times and for particular purposes, has not been adicated from the realm of possibility. After all, the late Anglo-Saxon urchman Aelfric condemned things done ‘by means of wizardry or runes’, ough admittedly he was doing so after the arrival of a wave of candinavian immigrants.[111]

Anglo-Saxon Paganisms: The Material Evidence

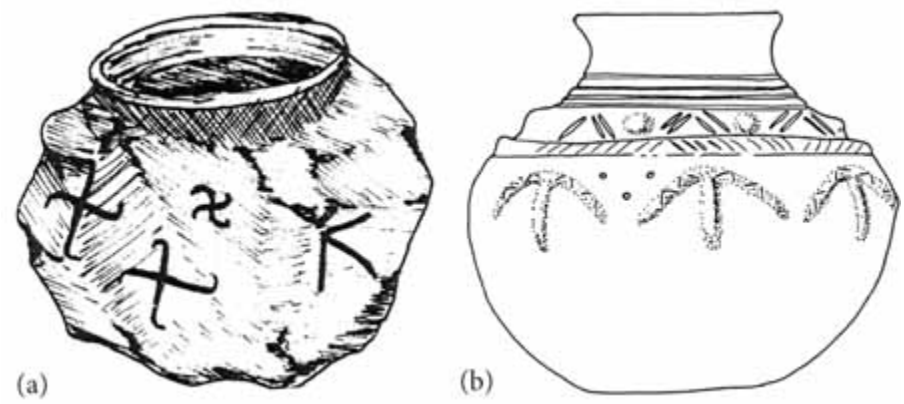
The main material evidence for the spiritual beliefs of the early English nsists of burials, which are very abundant: indeed, almost 1,200 pagan nglo-Saxon cemeteries have so far been discovered.[112] They lie beneath elds and copses in many parts of eastern England, their presence or former esence sometimes betrayed by low hummocks in the grass or leaf mould. lmost 26,000 Anglo-Saxon graves have now been excavated, compared ith a handful of settlements, and so we know much more about the early nglish in death than in life. On the whole, cremation was the preferred ode of burial, and it was more prevalent in the ‘Anglian’ areas of the East idlands and East Anglia, while inhumation, of whole bodies, was more mmon further south in the ‘Saxon’ regions. Another overall trend is that e poor tended to be cremated and the rich inhumed. Both modes are, wever, found almost everywhere and at all social levels, and often gether in the same cemetery, and the only really safe generalization is that e pagan English liked to put their dead into the earth, and often with ods. A large minority of inhumations and about half of all cremations ere accompanied by the latter, making goods far more common with rials than they had been either in the Iron Age or among the Roman itons. This represented, in effect, a serious loss of useful possessions by a latively impoverished agrarian society. The Anglo-Saxons were clearly ore inclined than previous societies in Britain to believe that their dead ould be equipped for the next world, or that their possessions were owed them, or that gifts should be made to them or to the deities who were

king them into care: none the less, burials with goods were still a ivileged group overall.

Cremations were generally interred in urns, which tended to get larger d better decorated according to the age and riches of the person inside.[113] very wide range of objects was put with them, including crystal or glass ads, combs, shears, brooches, tweezers and razors. These were often timate articles, provided perhaps to make the deceased look good in the terlife, or perhaps because their close association with their previous vner would induce the latter to haunt anybody to whom they were passed ; or perhaps, again, because they had been used by mourners to transform eir appearance for the funeral rites. The fact that miniature models of the ods were sometimes provided could argue that the first of those planations was more important, or that they had a high symbolic value. omen were burned with personal ornaments; by contrast, knives and eapons were rarely put with cremations, but animal parts and whole rcasses were common, burned on the pyre as foodstuffs, companions, tems, symbolic beings related to aspects of cosmology, or offerings to werful protective beings. About 80 per cent of the urns were decorated, ith a very complex iconography: like tombstones, they said things about e deceased. One very common symbol used was the *wyrm*, a serpentine rm which may have stood for a snake or a dragon. This could have nctioned as a personal protector: here, after all, may be the origin of ldhelm's 'foul snake'. The swastika was almost as popular, perhaps a mbol of fire or of Thunor. There were many more, and an understanding their significance would be a little easier if we knew who chose them; hether they were potters' brand-marks, or personal symbols of the dead, or osen by mourners, like flowers at present-day funerals. It is even possible at cinerary urns were viewed as dedicatory vessels in which the dead were fered up, often with additional gifts, to deities or ancestors: or rather, parts the dead, because as before only a portion of the bones was recovered om the pyre.

87 An Anglo-Saxon cemetery under a copse on the hill above Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk. The mmocks at the foot of the trees, made by excavation, mark the site of the graves.

88 Anglo-Saxon cremation urns from a cemetery at Sancton, Yorkshire, showing the swastika ›tif: redrawn from the original illustrations made by J. N. L. Myres.



89 More Anglo-Saxon cremation urns. (a) Another from Sancton bears both the swastika and the ' designs, perhaps indicating the gods Thunor and Tiw or thunder and lightning (and so divine fire). drawn from another of J. N. L. Myres's illustrations. (b) One from the Spong Hill cemetery, rfolk, has raised 'T' designs. Redrawn after C. M. Hills and K. Penn.

Almost six thousand inhumations are well recorded. Infants – relatively re in cemeteries but still more common than in those of earlier periods – nded to be interred with an unusual orientation, stones placed over the odies, or amulets. All these measures signal anxiety, perhaps because the bies concerned had died suddenly and mysteriously. Children were often uried crouching, like foetuses, and were quite commonly given adult eapons or jewellery, either as marks of their families' rank or because they ere expected to keep on growing in the next life. Adults tended to be uried fully clothed and on their backs, either west to east with heads to est, or north to south. Almost half of all adult men had weapons, above all ears and shields, and often vessels for food or drink were laid with them as ell. In several cemeteries those with weapons tended to be taller than hers, although of all ages and sometimes crippled, and only as well ourished as the other burials; so weaponry was the sign of a special social oup rather than of warriors as such. Likewise, women commonly had wellery, but many did not, and some women had weapons while some men d ornaments of the kind found with women. All this may point to a nuine, if not standard, conception of a world after death. Grave goods ere extremely varied. There were fewer animals than with cremations, but ll plenty, and as with cremated bodies these were mostly of edible

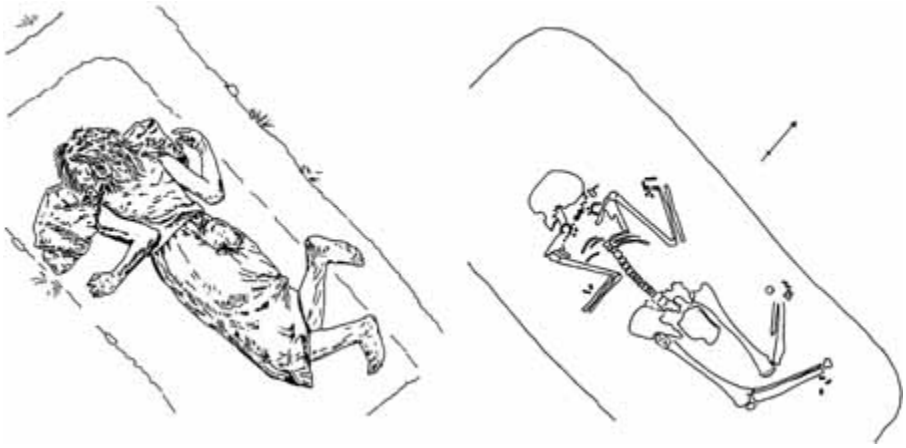
vestock but also of dogs and horses: indeed, the latter were more common graves than they could possibly have been in the economy. Other equently deposited items were amulets, especially with women; most often wrie shells, horses' teeth and boars' tusks. The first and last of those ight have been vaginal and lunar symbols respectively. Beads – made from ystal, amber, amethyst or quartz – could also have been amuletic. There as no single 'image of death' in an Anglo-Saxon inhumation, and – just as ith many earlier kinds of monument – the process of making a grave may ve been more important than its final form. That process, in each case, ems to have been very much the result of a set of individual choices, or ose of small groups, or of specialists in those groups – perhaps priests or nning women – drawing upon a set of relatively localized and namically developing ideas. The burial that resulted would, of course, ve been merely the last act in a long sequence of funeral rites which are mpletely lost to us.

Just as in Romano-British cemeteries, certain burials have impressed me modern scholars as sinister. About a quarter of all inhumations were posed on others, which in most cases may have been a gesture of affection d continued unity in death. In nine cases, well scattered across eastern gland, high-status burials – male or female – were accompanied by a wer-status person put unceremoniously over or under them. They may ve been servants, who had died around the same time and were sent to rry on their service in the next life, but there are a few instances where olition is in doubt. At Welbeck Hill in Lincolnshire, a beheaded woman as laid over an important old man, while at Portway in Hampshire a man d been laid over a woman put into the grave with bound wrists; and three nilar pairings are known. In four cases suggestions have even been made at people (all female) were buried alive, but other explanations are ssible for the disarrangement of the bodies concerned.[114] At another ampshire site, Worthy Park, a girl had been thrown into a grave face-down ith her wrists and heels apparently bound. Most of the bodies companying burials of higher status were put in face-down, and this is nerally so rare in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries that it was probably deliberate many cases. There is no continuation of it from Roman Britain, as it pears in English graves only in the late sixth century. It may have been a

e intended to ensure that the spirit of the person remained at the place and ıarded it; whatever the reason, prone burials were given grave goods in the me measure as the ordinary kind, so the position was not necessarily a sgrace; and they are almost all found in normal burial grounds. As in ɔman times, also, some bodies were decapitated. In a few cases, such as e mass grave with fifty headless corpses near Thetford in the Norfolk eckland, this is almost certainly the result of a massacre. When such ırials are scattered around cemeteries – fifty-four examples of which are ıown, most male – they may have been victims of war or of execution, or sabled to prevent their ghosts from walking. Inevitably, the spectre of ıman sacrifice hovers over some. The Roman historian Tacitus stressed at the tribes of Germany in general, including the ancestors of the English, ere very fond of this custom, and a fifth-century Roman author from Gaul, donius, asserted that the Saxons drowned or crucified a slave, chosen by t, as an offering before going on a raid. Once again, it is impossible to ıow what level of distortion or misunderstanding is present in these counts. It is notable that not a single source mentions the sacrifice of ımans in Anglo-Saxon England, even those produced by Christians with e most inveterate hostility to paganism.[115]

It seems likely, from the regularity with which graves were laid out in e cemeteries, that they were marked. In some cases, traces of these arkers have been found, in the form of wooden posts, and of fences and tches round the site; which suggests not merely that the layout was kept gular but that some kind of veneration of the dead continued after the ırial. Most cemeteries had fewer than a hundred burials, but fifty of them ere larger, and that at Spong Hill on the clay plateau of central Norfolk had er two thousand. By contrast, there are virtually no Anglo-Saxon graves in e later counties of Northumberland and Durham, leaving modern ɔmmentators wondering if the first English there did not bury their dead, ıt exposed them or scattered their ashes. In their German homeland, the ŋglo-Saxons sometimes raised mounds over their dead, but these only ɔpear in England from the late sixth century. They may have been copied ɔm prehistoric barrows – which the Anglo-Saxons indeed often reused as ırial places – or used as markers to claim land, or monuments to flaunt an herence to paganism in the face of Christian challenge. They seem to have

en a matter for individual taste – there were four at Spong Hill, for ample – and they do not always cover especially wealthy graves. omplete cemeteries of barrow burials, sometimes with impressive mounds, e also known: and huge solitary mounds were constructed as well, often anding prominently in high places with wide views. The problem of ltural influences, in this respect as in others, stems from the fact that the nglish of the sixth and seventh centuries were very adaptable and culturally namic people with horizons extending all over the Scandinavian and erman world, links stretching as far as the Mediterranean and ideas taken om the native British and the sight of Roman and prehistoric monuments in e lands which they settled. The goods at Spong Hill alone show influences om Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Germany, while about a quarter of all nown Anglo-Saxon burial sites were associated with some form of ehistoric or Roman monument: apparently the early English often liked to dge their dead in some sense of ancestral continuity with the land, even if e ancestors were not literally their own. There is a pronounced tendency r funerals and graves to become more ornate towards the end of the pagan riod as Anglo-Saxon society grew more sophisticated and its kingdoms ore powerful: the possible appearance of temples also fits this pattern.



90 Drawing and reconstruction of the possible ‘live’ burial of a woman at Sewerby, Yorkshire, er S. M. Hirst.

The most remarkable of all the cemeteries are those which probably longed to the rulers of East Anglia, at Snape and Sutton Hoo near the ffolk coast. They seem to have begun with cremations in bronze bowls or humations in coffins, and barrows were increasingly raised over burials.

ıen interments with horses were added at Sutton Hoo, and finally (in this ıjectural sequence) the bodies were laid in boats or ships, two at Snape d two at Sutton Hoo.[116] The size of the vessels was not standard, one at ıape being 50 feet (over 15 metres) long and the other a mere dinghy. At ıtton Hoo a 65-foot ship was put over a timber chamber, while a 90-foot ıe in a different mound became the chamber itself, containing the famous easure of bowls, spoons, weapons, armour and regalia, found in 1939 and w displayed in the British Museum. One item, the helmet with pointed ce mask, has become iconic, being the defining face of the Dark Ages for any artists and designers. The ship, the largest known from northern ırope before the Viking era, would have needed forty oars, and it is rhaps notable that the treasure included a bag of thirty-seven coins and ree gold pieces, as if to pay a full complement of ghostly rowers. Two ements of the cemetery – cremations under mounds and ship burials – ere not traditional in Anglo-Saxon England but recent innovations. This as a new and flamboyant manifestation of paganism, probably produced by newly appeared kingdom.[117]

91 The huge Anglo-Saxon barrow at Taplow, in the Thames Valley in Buckinghamshire, set ong the tombs of a now-demolished church which seems to have had an Anglo-Saxon predecessor. e scoop taken out of the mound by the Victorian excavators is clearly visible, a project which lded a rich treasure of grave goods, from a classic ‘warrior’ grave of the period. The position of the ırch nearby suggests either that it was deemed fitting to build a Christian holy place near the resting

ce of a famous leader, or else (just possibly) that, despite the grave goods and mound, the man laid re was actually a Christian convert, who had been buried with traditional trappings but in nsecrated ground and with Christian rites.

The excavation was sponsored by the landowner Edith May Pretty, and e story of her decision to do so is one which combines romance, tragedy d (possibly) the supernatural. She and her husband, Colonel Pretty, had llen in love when she was eighteen, but her parents had forbidden the atch, because although both families had made their money from anufacturing, his had turned out less prestigious goods than hers asometers instead of corsets). They waited patiently until her mother and ther had both died, and then wed, only for Colonel Pretty to perish himself, ddenly, a few years later. His heartbroken widow took up spiritualism in e hope of making contact with him, only to be advised (it is said) by one edium to dig up the ancient mounds that rose from the heath, studded with acken, birch and gorse, and purple with heather in late summer, on her tate. She duly hired an experienced archaeologist from the Ipswich useum, who found some looted Anglo-Saxon burials, with a few objects ll remaining. A second season of work was undertaken (with further couragement from the medium), and the ship burial and its treasure were scovered. This immediately resulted in the substitution of a more highly ained and celebrated archaeologist, Charles Phillips of Cambridge niversity, for the local one, Basil Brown, who had made the find. Tension viftly erupted between the two, and worsened when Edith Pretty took own's side. None the less, the work was completed, to an excellent ndard for the time, and an inquest held at Sutton village hall, in classic cal English fashion, duly declared the finds, which included 8,000 gems, be the property of Mrs Pretty. She gallantly donated all to the nation, just time for them to spend the Second World War hidden in a London nderground station as bombs rained on the city above. The war's end lowed them to take their place at the British Museum, where fifteen years patient study and reconstruction by a team led by Rupert Bruce-Mitford vealed the true extent of their number and nature.[118]

As important as the original excavation, for our understanding of the e, are the further investigations of the cemetery conducted by Martin rver between 1983 and 1992. He found more high-status burials, and

tablished the likely site sequence narrated above. He also discovered that e barrows were ringed by other bodies, half of which showed clear signs of olent death, having been beheaded or hanged. This initially raised again e possibility of sacrificial rites, conducted as a feature of the funerals (and rhaps providing the oarsmen for the ship of the dead), but subsequent ting of the remains put them into the Christian Anglo-Saxon period, tween the eighth and eleventh centuries. They remain deeply significant, t probably in a different context: that the deserted pagan burial mounds ere made a place for the execution of criminals, who were thus removed om the community to a place presumably associated by then with ghosts d devils. Characteristically of the early English, the grave goods have ltural associations extending from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, and e identity of the warrior buried in the ship remains uncertain, as is his ith. The goods in it included Christian baptismal spoons, which could ggest that the owner had been Redwald, the most powerful of all East nglian kings and one noted by Bede as having honoured Christ and pagan ities in the same temple. This would accord well with the Christian objects id in a flamboyantly pagan burial context; but they may have been looted om a Christian owner by one of the dead man's ancestors, or those of a end who presented them to him.[119] The Sutton Hoo cemetery is now in the nds of the National Trust, which has built an excellent visitor centre and ped off the mounds, access now being permitted only by the purchase of e of the limited places on guided tours. This arrangement protects the site d does justice to it, and it is an unworthy emotion that makes the present riter remember fondly his boyhood image of the place, as a flock of low muli, deserted upon the misty heath.

Other forms of material evidence for the religious activities of the early nglish are not merely eclipsed by the burial evidence but genuinely rare in mparison. It is clear, for example, that they preferred to put goods into aves than into pits by themselves, as ritual deposits. The most famous llection of Anglo-Saxon metalwork yet found in a single location is the taffordshire Hoard' discovered in a field near Ogley Hay in the southern rt of the county, by a private treasure hunter in 2009. It consisted of more an 3,490 individual pieces, most from artefacts related to war – above all ord hilts – which seem to date to between the sixth and eighth centuries. It

ay have been interred as an act of ritual, at a place which was regarded as cred, or the owner may have intended to return and retrieve it, and failed; e span of presumed dates for the objects extends far enough into the ristian period to make the former possibility rather less likely than the ter. The manner in which the objects were recovered has left experts certain of whether they were buried hurriedly, placed in a grave or opped on the surface of the ground; and so we lack a proper context for em.[120] Likewise, Anglo-Saxon metalwork is sometimes found in rivers – earheads have been dredged from the Thames and three of its tributaries – t there has been relatively less inclination to emphasize the possibility that was ritually deposited than when dealing with wetland finds from earlier riods. None has yet been located in lakes or pools.[121]

There is a little more mileage in studying the imagery of early English t, mostly as displayed on metal artefacts. A dancing nude warrior with a rned helmet on a famous belt buckle from a cemetery at Finglesham, near e eastern coast of Kent, might be a votary of Woden (or might not be).[122] oden himself may appear in a male head wearing a large headpiece, and ith a bird on either side, on a brooch from an early sixth-century woman's ave on Chessell Down in the Isle of Wight: if Woden were similar to the orse Odin, then the headpiece could be a slouched hat and the birds endant ravens.[123] Shields were commonly ornamented with animal shapes o small to have been seen by others as a badge of the wearer's identity, and aturing open-jawed monstrous beasts. These might well have invested the jects on which they were mounted with spiritual protection.[124] Aleks uskowski has noted the central part that animals in general play in Anglo-xon art, while animal elements commonly appeared in personal names d (as said) the bodies of beasts were incorporated into mortuary rites. ey decorate both weaponry and female jewellery, and may have played e same symbolic and protective role on both. There is very little evidence r active veneration of them as divine, except perhaps for Aldhelm's snake d stag, but they seem to have played a key part in the conceptualization of ciety and the cosmos. The desirable qualities which some seemed to ssess – especially powerful wild beasts such as bears, wolves, boars, stags d eagles – were apparently regarded as being susceptible to access and use humans; and it is possible that they were used symbolically to facilitate a

nnection with the supernatural. Among domestic creatures, the horse ands out for its importance in imagery and ritual, equated (unlike, for ample, the dog) with high social and political status. Particular species ay have been connected with particular deities.[125] All this, however, lacks solute proof, though it has a strong probability. Overall, it remains true at most of the surviving evidence of Anglo-Saxon religious beliefs and stoms surrounds dead human beings, rather than focusing on the living orld, the simple result of the survival of so many cemeteries.

92 'Finglesham Man', the dancing nude warrior with a helmet topped by two beaked heads, on a ckle found in a late sixth-century grave in East Kent. The same figure is common on Swedish mets of the seventh century. The beaked heads could be those of eagles, and eagles and a spear re associated with the Scandinavian god Odin: so the warrior in these images could be a votary of t god. On the other hand, he could simply be performing a victory dance, and there is in any case guarantee, if the connection with Odin is correct, that it made the journey to Kent, or can be linked the equivalent Anglo-Saxon deity Woden.

93 The most famous of the Anglo-Saxon boar images, which may have conferred supernatural wer on the warrior who donned them: found on a helmet in a grave at Benty Grange, Derbyshire.

94 A motif on the metal fittings of a purse found among the Sutton Hoo treasure. It could display Scandinavian god Odin, between his attendant wolves, or the equivalent English god Woden, if he ured the same mythology; or a solar god being swallowed by celestial monsters; or a man attacked wolves or similar creatures; or a shaman in trance, with servitor animal spirits; or a god or spirit o controlled animals; or none of the above. The range of choice is typical for such images.

The Christianization of the English

In 597 a Christian mission was launched from Rome, at the personal hest of Pope Gregory the Great, to reclaim for his religion the former habitants of the Roman province of Britain by converting the English to ristianity and persuading the remnants of the native British to bring their vn varieties of the faith into conformity with his own. Both aims were hieved, though the former, which is the business of the present book, uch more swiftly than the latter. It was indeed formally completed in 686, that the whole process took up the space of just one, long, human

etime. The records of it effectively represent the restoration of history to uthern Britain, providing as they do a more or less continuous narrative in hich firmly attested leaders operate and have relationships with each other. ıose records are, however, as badly defective as a portrait of the manner in hich conversion was achieved as they are as a source for the religions hich it supplanted. Very few are contemporary with the process, and those e mainly letters from popes, who were physically remote from it and so ɔt directly engaged. Most of the rest consist of histories and saints' lives oduced by monks writing at a remove of one to three generations from the ents they were describing, and not much interested in how their ɔmpatriots actually became Christian. They regarded the superiority of eir own religion as self-evident, and reported that it was imparted to athens by preaching and by the working of miracles by saints, the deeds nd physical relics) of whom lent prestige and authority to the religious ɔuses in which the literature concerned was written.

Most of the representations of ordinary English people caught up in the umph of Christianity which appear in the works of authors like Bede are t in the period that succeeded conversion, one of uneasy adjustment to the w religion. For example, Bede portrays a crowd of peasants above the outh of the Tyne in about the year 650, almost two decades after the final ıposition of the faith upon their kingdom, watching rafts bearing monks ɔm South Shields being swept out to sea by a gale. They jeer at the lpless men for disdaining the lives of ordinary folk and doing away with e old worship, so that 'now nobody knows what to do'. The point of the ecdote was that the future Saint Cuthbert was at hand and his prayers anged the wind, impressing the crowd: it was told by a man who had been that crowd to a monk who passed on the story to Bede. Another episode in ıthbert's life came when he had joined a monastery himself, at Melrose in e Tweed Valley of southern Scotland. Plague struck the district, and many ho had been baptized abandoned their new faith and 'fled to idols' with nulets and incantations to ward off the disease. Cuthbert had to go out into e hills to preach them back into belief. Bede knew at least one man who d been at Melrose Abbey at the time and would have been an ewitness.[126] These are still tales recorded at second and third hand, but the ltural setting which they portray, of a resentful and confused local

ɔpulace, still unsteady in its recently acquired religion, is not wholly editable to Christianity and has a ring of truth about it. They also have a corded chain of transmission, instead of arising from an amorphous mass pious tradition as so many of the stories of the conversion period itself do.

When all the necessary admissions have been made about the ficiencies of the source material, the outlines of the process of ristianization, and the reasons for its success, are still pretty clear. They il down to three factors. The first was that the pagan English were almost rrounded by Christians, in the shape of the powerful and influential new ngdom of the Franks to the south and east, the native British and Irish to e west and north, and the Scots of Argyll to the north. In effect, they were ken in a pincer, by a missionary effort launched almost simultaneously ɔm Rome, with the assistance of Continental kings and churches, and from eland.[127] It was the Irish who proved the more important, as, operating twards from their great British base on Iona, they secured the conversion Northumbria, the northern English kingdom that became the dominant rce in seventh-century British politics. They also established important ntres for evangelism as far south as the Suffolk and Sussex coasts and the ɔper Thames Valley. The Roman mission, however, never lost its grip on its iginal bridgehead in East Kent, even though it suffered two periods of ajor reverses and in the first of these, in 616, was reduced to a nucleus at anterbury, bereft of royal support. Nevertheless, it hung on, and followed ch spate of losses with a new campaign of evangelism which made up the rmer ground and added more, until by the late seventh century it had come the leading force in British Christianity. Ambitious and devout urchmen were constantly attracted from the Continent to the work of claiming Britain, coming not just from Rome itself but from the Frankish d Burgundian kingdoms and with the support of the churches there. There a growing tendency among scholars to believe that the native British may so have exerted influence on the Anglo-Saxons, and induced some of them take on Christianity, in parts of the West Country and West Midlands. ertainly pagan burials seem to be rare or absent there, before any external ristian campaign could have reached these areas, while some cults of itish saints continued.[128] The English were thus subjected to a sustained d determined missionary effort, from most points of the compass. It also

attered greatly that the faith thus preached to them had already been lopted by the most powerful, sophisticated and culturally and chnologically advanced states in Europe, to which rulers who accepted it uld much more easily be linked in trade, diplomacy and alliance.

The second factor in Christian success was the pivotal position of the onarch in the various kingdoms into which the English were forming by e end of the sixth century. As was the case all over northern Europe, the itial effort of conversion was always aimed straight at the king, who would en place the full force of his authority and patronage at the service of his w religion. In return, Christianity awarded supportive monarchs a nsecration and reinforcement of their power over their subjects which it d by now long been accustomed to bestow upon those of the editerranean world. The allegiance of the king was automatically followed mass baptisms among his people, as native paganisms possessed no ternative sources of authority.[129] The reception of the original Roman ission in Kent in 597 was ensured by the fact that the reigning ruler, thelberht, already had a Christian wife, a Frank, who was practising her ligion freely with a bishop as her chaplain. It was another stroke of luck, or t of providence, that Aethelberht was also the most respected English onarch of the time, and followed his own conversion by imposing nversion on his nephew, who held the client state of Essex. He married a ughter to the new king of Northumbria, on condition that she could take ristianity with her, and she duly provided the conduit for the conversion her husband in turn. Upon his death in battle, this mission was dangered, but rescued by the rapid rise of another Northumbrian monarch ho had spent his exile on Iona and invited in the Irish from there. The ntinuing expansion of Northumbrian power enabled the imposition of the ith of Christ on the large Midland realm of Mercia, and on Wessex, East nglia and Essex, which all became client states. The fact that Sussex and e Isle of Wight were the last kingdoms in England to convert was simply ue to the fact that they were small and isolated, and outside the main rrents of English royal power politics, rather than the result of any special opensity to resistance on their part. Sussex was eventually taken under the ing of Mercia, the monarchs of which had begun to increase their own fluence at the expense of that of Northumbria and Wessex. The Mercian

ng had his Sussex neighbour baptized and offered him two provinces of essex if he commenced a missionary effort in his own kingdom, starting ith his nobility. The grateful client immediately obliged, and met with no fficulty. The fate of Wight was more violent, because it was conquered by usurping king of Wessex, anxious to reassert himself in the face of ercian ambition. Christian priests followed his victorious army, and he aciously allowed the last two princes of the native royal house of Wight to baptized before he had them killed.[130]

These ‘external’ considerations were both of major importance in counting for Christian success, but so was a third: that, unlike Christianity, tive English forms of religion were not missionary and militant faiths. To t it another way, pagans simply did not take religion as seriously as ristians did, because they did not regard it as embodying divine law or rrying a choice of salvation or damnation as a consequence. The monks ho wrote the histories and saints’ lives were not surprised at the apparent se with which Anglo-Saxons embraced allegiance to Christ, but were zzled and dismayed by the equally insouciant manner with which they en dumped it when kings and circumstances changed. Most English ngdoms reverted to paganism when the original royal convert died, and the ork of redemption had to begin anew. Æthelberht’s heir in Kent rejected ristianity because his bishop would not let him marry his father’s widow, hile the sons of the first Christian sovereign of Essex did so because their shop would not admit them to communion before they were baptized. dwald of East Anglia, as described, is said cheerfully to have installed ars to Christ and to pagan deities in his temple, under the impression that is took care of every problem. Essex fell away twice, the second occasion, late as 665, being precipitated by the same plague epidemic which had aken the faith of the people of the Tweed Valley. One of the East Saxon ngs, with many of his subjects, turned back then to older deities for aid, fore he was reclaimed for Christ by an eloquent bishop sent by the pious nd powerful) ruler of Mercia.[131] Furthermore, whether they adopted or scarded Christianity, the pagan English never seem to have regarded it as evil religion. By this period, orthodox Christians routinely expected the umph of their faith to be accompanied by the suppression of paganism, but gans had no similar concerns. Before becoming Christian, the rulers of

ıssex had allowed or ignored the establishment of a community of Irish onks on their coast at Bosham. The leader of the original mission sent by regory to Kent crossed Britain six years after his arrival, to confer with itish bishops in the Severn Valley, and none of the sovereigns of the pagan ngdoms which he traversed seems to have been troubled by his presence. nda, the last pagan king of Mercia, was similarly unconcerned when his vn son and heir converted to Christianity to marry a daughter of the king of orthumbria, and he allowed the priests brought in by his son to preach eely.[132]

It is therefore not surprising that the story of the Christianization of the nglish, like that of the whole of the British Isles, contains no definite stance of a missionary being put to death by pagans for his religion. In fault of any, Christian writers stretched the category of martyrdom to ver especially zealous convert kings who died in battle against pagan ponents, but the exercise is not a convincing one, even on the evidence of e writers themselves. Bede made a particular effort to demonize Penda, ho killed five Christian kings, as an enemy of true religion, but it is clear om the context that Penda was merely conducting his share of the brutal wer politics of seventh-century English state-building. His allies were nerally as Christian as his opponents. When he finally died in battle ainst the Northumbrians in 655, Bede hailed this as a deliverance ‘from e hostile attacks of the heathen’. However, Penda was accompanied on his st campaign by the estranged son of the Northumbrian monarch who feated him, and by the king of East Anglia, both of them followers of rist. The king of Wessex who conquered Wight and sent in Christian issionaries to legitimize his act in the eyes of his neighbours was himself ll personally a pagan when he did these things, and was not baptized for a w more years.[133] The traditional religious tolerance of the Anglo-Saxons ok some time to erode even after conversion. Pope Gregory stated in his tters that he expected a Christian king to terminate pagan worship among s subjects as part of the transformation consequent on baptism, destroying ıages of the old deities and altars to them. Not for almost half a century ter the arrival of his mission in Kent, however, did a ruler of that kingdom der this step, and with it the imposition of Christian feasts and fasts upon l of his people; and he was the first English king to do so, although such a

pressive programme had become routine by the end of the seventh ntury.[134] It seems that the more aggressive, determined and monopolistic ligion had the edge over its rivals, simply because it cared more about inning, and demanded absolute victory. This relationship is a classic ntrast between examples of what theorists of religious studies currently m 'indigenous' and 'world' religions. The former are generally tribal, rritorial and particular, non-proselytizing, folk-orientated, and dependent mythology and customary law rather than literary texts.[135] The latter are aracterized by systematic theology embodied in writing, and by clusivity, proselytizing and universalism.[136] When the two collide, the sult is usually the same as that achieved in Anglo-Saxon England.

The framework of the conversion process can thus be reconstructed with fair degree of probable accuracy in modern times. What is lost, and must left to individual or group judgement, is how far the different factors in it mbined in the case of particular people, states and situations.

The Viking Incursion

Only about a century after each part of the British Isles had formally nbraced Christianity, the new religion faced a fresh challenge, in the form pagan raiders, who then often became settlers, from Norway and enmark. In their initial form, as plunderers and slavers, they bore the name Viking, which has been given to them by history. They represented a ief, if dramatic, interruption to the progress of the faith of Christ, for they peared at the end of the eighth century, made an increasingly serious pact on the archipelago in the course of the ninth, and were already arting to convert to Christianity by the end of that period. By the late tenth ntury, most of those settled in the British Isles had made the transition and eir Scandinavian homelands had begun to do so, Denmark converting in e 960s and Norway between 995 and 1030. None the less, during their ief period of operation in the British islands as pagans, they were able to ake a significant cultural impact and add another layer of pagan tradition the already rich historic and prehistoric accumulation. This impact was lt especially in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland, and adjacent rts of the mainland, and in the far north of England and in Yorkshire, the st Midlands and East Anglia.

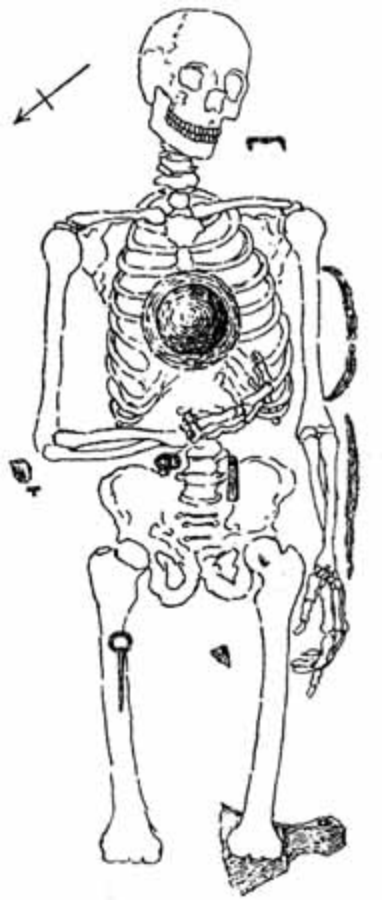
In recent decades there have been differences of opinion with regard to e amount of damage that the first Viking incursions did to British ristianity; and these have in turn been part of a wider debate over the tent of their destructive impact.[137] It was instigated from the 1960s wards, pre-eminently by Peter Sawyer but also by other scholars who lieved that this impact had been much exaggerated by monastic authors palled by the paganism of the newcomers. Historians of this school mphasized instead the positive contributions the Scandinavians made to the nds in which they settled, by founding towns, establishing new trade routes d returning accumulated wealth to circulation. In the religious sphere it essed the rapidity with which they converted to Christianity and the ntinuity or swift re-establishment of ecclesiastical organization in regions hich they took over. This was the more remarkable in the absence of any corded missionary effort to convert them: but then written evidence for the ocess of their conversion, especially in England, is very scarce in any case. seems that most of the churches in English regions occupied by Danish lers survived, perhaps because the new lords wanted to keep their ristian subjects tractable. Those lords also, however, showed an thusiasm for adopting the trappings of the wealthier and more respected nglish rulers, such as coinage and literacy. The support of churchmen was other of those, and helped to make the newcomers look royal in English es. In the Scottish islands there are possible church sites which date from e period in which pagan Norse rulers held control, and an apparent ference to a bishop resident in Orkney. Even in their earliest phases of iding, there is no sign that Vikings regarded themselves as waging a holy ar on Christianity.

On the other hand, the amount of harm done was also considerable. Most oceses in parts of England taken by Scandinavians vanished at least mporarily, and no activity by higher churchmen is apparent in most of em between 880 and 920. The churches that survived there usually did so ith less wealth and status, and an apparent loss of records and books, with accompanying decline in literacy. Great British Christian centres such as na and its English colony on Lindisfarne were relocated to the mainland, d the original sites only reoccupied much later, while other notable onasteries, such as that of Portmahomack, were badly damaged, and yet

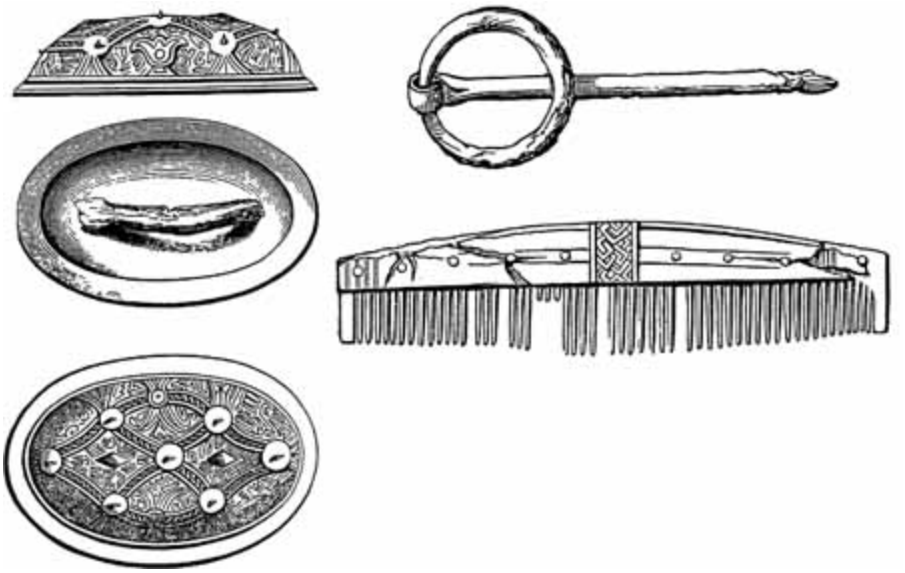
hers, including Bede’s own house of Jarrow, were abandoned permanently. is still possible to make a case that the behaviour of the Vikings was not in elf more atrocious than that of other early medieval northern Europeans, ıt it is one which fails to take into account the fact that they provoked more ɔrror among Christians because they ignored the usual conventions of arfare. They were strangers from distant places, not familiar local enemies, d attacked from the sea, turning monasteries which had hitherto enjoyed e relative safety of sites on islands and peninsulas into easy targets. They d not merely loot churches frequently and without inhibition, but stroyed them, and killed or enslaved their clergy.

As with all the early historical pagans of Britain, the most abundant idence of Viking ritual and religious belief is provided by graves. As fore, these are distinguished as pagan by the slightly unreliable indicator the burial of weapons and body ornaments with the dead. Scotland has ost, a current total of around 130, and the largest number of those is in the kney Islands, by all signs the region of the British Isles most heavily ttled by Scandinavians. Scattered graves have been found in the Shetlands d in Caithness, and on most of the Western Isles and a few of the western ninsulas of the Highlands. Orkney has several cemeteries, and three more e known in the Hebrides. Virtually all the burials are inhumations, with ıe certain cremation, of a richly furnished woman on the isle of Arran. As emation was the standard rite in the settlers’ homeland of Norway, they obably copied the fashion for unburnt burial from the Christian British nong whom they took up residence; but they did not often use Christian meteries. The position and orientation of bodies varied, and graves were ɛewise sometimes given low mounds or put into older barrows. Bodies ere occasionally interred in boats, which might have been regarded as large ffins, or symbols of the dead person’s power or occupation in life, or as odes of transport to the next life. Grave goods may have been everyday jects or chosen specially for the burial rite, and it is hard to distinguish y with specific cultic associations, though one woman in Orkney had a mmer pendant, often taken as a symbol of the Scandinavian thunder god, ıor. A few horses and dogs were included in graves. The timescale for all ese finds is a brief one, reckoned at present to be most probably between 0 and 950.[138]

England has only twenty-five known Viking burial sites, most of solitary aves. The majority are in the northern counties but they are scattered as far uth as Berkshire and Suffolk. This is an oddly low number, given the nsity of settlement in those regions and the East Midlands and East Anglia ggested by the number of Scandinavian place names. It also compares angely with the tens of thousands of known pagan Anglo-Saxon graves. A w Viking weapons found in northern English churchyards probably came om pagan burials. This scant record has been one reason for an assumption at the newcomers quickly converted, although to a more secular form of ristianity less focused on monasticism: at the very least, it is apparent that e Vikings who settled in England did not much need ritual displays of fference from the native population. In recent years three of the twenty-ve sites have overshadowed the rest. A cemetery was found in 2009 by easure hunters, at Cumwhitton in the Eden Valley of Cumbria, near arlisle. It had a range of weapons, dress ornaments and accessories, the rgest object found being a needlework box.[139] Most attention, however, s been drawn to the Anglo-Saxon monastery at Repton on the River Trent, hich was the burial place of Mercian kings. In the winter of 873–4 it came the base of a large army of Viking invaders, who left a number of aves. Some were placed at the end of the church, and included the grave of man who had been killed by a slicing blow through the artery of one thigh. e was laid with a silver hammer amulet, a sword, a knife, a key, a boar's sk and a jackdaw bone. The royal Mercian mausoleum, however, had been nverted into a mass grave, in which disarticulated bones from at least 249 dividuals had been interred around the burial of a single high-ranking man. the east, at Ingleby, is the only known Scandinavian cremation cemetery the British Isles, of around sixty mounds, many of which covered the nes of men and women who had been burned with weapons and jewels, ong with cattle, sheep, dogs and pigs. Some of the animals were complete, if companions or sacrifices, and others were disjointed, as if for food. nly a third of the bodies were burned on the spot, the rest being presented by small quantities of bone cremated elsewhere.[140]



95 Drawing of a male Norse burial at Reay, Caithness, with its grave goods, mainly weaponry, as ınd in 1926: redrawn after A. J. H. Edwards.



96 Pagan Norse grave goods dug up at Pierowall, on Westray in the Orkney Islands, in 1839: rawn after Thomas Crofton Croker.

How are the graves in and near Repton to be interpreted? There is no solute proof that those at Ingleby were left by the army of 873–4, but there no other credible context for them. It could be that they were those of the kings who did not want to make any compromises with the local ristians, unlike those interred at the church. Instead these Vikings nsigned their comrades and womenfolk to a starkly pagan and candinavian burial rite, the flames of which would have dramatically uminated the skyline above the Trent. The token burials of bone could ve been those of warriors who had fallen on campaign and had portions of eir remains brought carefully to this war cemetery for a proper funeral. It doubtful, however, whether the burials at the church can confidently be terpreted as those of members of the army who felt a greater affinity with e English and with Christianity. They might equally well have represented e deliberate intrusion and imposition of an alien and hostile culture, to secrate and appropriate one of the most sacred places of a conquered ngdom. Many (at least) of the bones in the mass grave seem to have been ose of long-dead English monks and kings, disinterred and thrown into a ap when a defensive ditch was dug around the Viking camp. The warlord ried at their centre might have wanted to lie in the midst of Christian holy en, but might equally have been laid in the midst of the former spiritual d royal leaders of vanquished enemies, piled around him as trophies. The st candidate for his identity remains the fearsome Viking chief Ivar the oneless, who died at Repton: the grave itself was removed in the neteenth century. Certainly, the burials at Repton and Ingleby show tween them the range of preferences for ritual found even within one gan Viking host. Whichever the explanation for them, the cremation metery was soon disused, but some of the graves in and around the church hich had Scandinavian goods date from a generation or so later, so that the e had seemingly remained a burial place for high-ranking Danish settlers.

The Isle of Man has the greatest single concentration of Viking remains the British Isles, having been the centre of an independent Scandinavian ngdom which lasted until the thirteenth century. This claim is true of rials as in other respects, as Man has over forty in an area of just 232

uare miles (some 380 square kilometres).[141] Three sites in particular have oduced remarkable discoveries. One is at Peel, the best harbour on the est coast, where an existing Christian cemetery received eight graves with ods datable to the early tenth century, the richest being that of a woman, e ‘Lady of Peel’. Her accompanying objects included a splendid necklace, beads from all over the Viking world, a pestle and mortar, and an iron asting spit, while bunches of herbs were placed in the grave. As her goods ere not generally of Scandinavian kind, she might be taken for a native anxwoman who had married a pagan Viking, or a descendant of Viking ttlers who had adopted locally available possessions. The spit seems too avy to have functioned as a staff: if this were not the case, she might be sociated with a category of Scandinavian prophetesses and wise women to hom a staff was a sign of office and power. The herbs and the mortar ossibly for grinding potions) might also hint at such a role. These part- gan graves in an otherwise Christian cemetery suggest a society of mixed hnicity following the Viking conquest, tolerant of different religions. At lladoole, on a hill overlooking the south coast, another Christian aveyard had been utilized, but this time for one of the island’s two Norse ip burials, which had been deliberately dug through existing graves in the ntre. This may have been an act intended to plant the newcomer, a well- essed adult male, in the holy ground of the native religion which was the sting place of previous local lords, but it also resembles one of desecration d humiliation. Then again, the preceding cemetery may have been elevant, and the mourners just determined to make the grave on a nvenient hill overlooking the sea. With him were bones from another rson, probably female, and over him had been laid burnt remains of horse, , pig, sheep or goat, dog and cat. There were no weapons, his goods but ols, a cauldron and horse harness. At Ballateare on the north-western ast, a young man had been buried in a wooden coffin or chamber, rrounded by weapons, including a sword which had been deliberately oken and a spear and shield which may also have been damaged for burial r in battle). His grave was covered with the cremated bones of a similar nge of animals, and the body of a young woman who had been thrown relessly on to it. A mound was then piled over the lot, topped with sods of rth from a different district which was perhaps the dead man’s original

nd. Both these last two sites were excavated, and the richness of Manx king archaeology revealed, by a first-rate German archaeologist, Gerhard ersu, who had been interned on the island during the Second World War as enemy alien, and found this employment during his confinement. He dug ith a spoon because the rules of internment forbade him better tools which ight be employed as weapons.

One habit the Vikings sometimes adopted, which had not belonged to the gan English, was the making of monumental sculpture. It was influenced the Christian taste for carved stone crosses and tombs, both of which ere accepted with gusto by Scandinavian settlers in some areas. In Britain, ch places are found mainly in northern England and southern Scotland, ith Man, again, having the most unusual concentration of crosses for its ze.[142] Cumbria and Yorkshire between them have over 600 monuments hich were erected either by Viking settlers or by Anglo-Saxons copying candinavian styles. Modern scholars have often been especially interested the motifs taken from pagan Scandinavian mythology which feature on a w slabs, and their implications for the process of Christianization. Their sessments of those implications, unsurprisingly, have been varied. To me, the deployment of such scenes argues for a period in which Christian d pagan beliefs were tolerated together and given equal honours: hence hrist's Crucifixion was shown in parallel with the destruction of most of e Norse pagan deities in the great conflict of Ragnarök, and Sigurd, the candinavian dragon-slayer, with saints celebrated for vanquishing evil ings, such as Michael. To others, they represent a Christian appropriation the pagan stories, so that it is actually the Crucifixion that brings about agnarök, and Sigurd is enlisted as a Christian hero. Such speculations are ade easier by the damage inflicted on many of the slabs concerned by time d humanity: few now survive with their decorative scheme intact, and the agments that remain can be reconstructed in different ways. The constructions are commonly made according to a pagan mythology which recorded only in Scandinavia, and there in much later texts compiled by hristians, when details of it may have altered.

To take the Manx case, only one scene from the island's many crosses, a ece from the church at Andreas in the far north, certainly portrays a deity. has a scene of the god Odin, accompanied by his trademark spear and

ven and with his foot in the jaws of the demonic wolf Fenrik, who devours m at Ragnarök. This is balanced by a Christian hero on the other side, lding book and cross. Less than half of the original decorative programme the slab survives, making it even more difficult to tell whether the angelist represents a complement to the god or his replacement and gation. It is possible that some of the other Manx crosses carry images of gan deities, but experts have become much less confident in identifying ese in British contexts than they were in the early twentieth century, cause all of the figures concerned could have alternative meanings. One ch specialist speaks entertainingly of the salutary lesson provided by one rving from Aspatria near the Cumbrian coast, 'which early scholars saw as pagan phallic image, only to discover that when reversed the fragment vealed a Christian figure with arms raised in prayer: his worn head had en mistaken for quite a different part of his anatomy'.[143] There is now parently universal agreement that none of them, in Britain or Man, are gan, as they all occur in Christian contexts, but their meaning there can (as id) be located in a great range of possibilities. These arguments can be oadened to take in portable ornaments, such as the hammer-pendants and nulets often taken to represent Thor. Three are known from Britain and its naller islands, of which two have been mentioned, but 121 from candinavia. Academic debate in the latter's nations has not resolved the uestion of whether they were an independent pagan symbol, a pagan swer to the cross, or just a local adaptation of the Christian cross itself. It ay have been each of those in specific places.[144]

No Viking temple or shrine has been found in the British Isles, and the orse word *hof* which could signify one, occurs as a place name only on uetland, the most northerly of all.[145] This is not surprising, if the religion of e pagan settlers was conducted mostly in the home and at natural places, d such a conclusion is strongly suggested by the directives issued by ulfstan, archbishop of York, in the aftermath of the official conversion of e Vikings in northern England to Christianity. He does not mention mples, but speaks instead of rites around wells, springs, rocks and trees, pecially the elder.[146] As water best preserves the offerings left by such tivities, wetlands have provided most of the evidence for them. Deposits prehistoric and early historic metalwork are relatively common in

:andinavian waters, and one of the peak periods for deposition there was e Viking era.[147] By 1965 a total of thirty-four Viking swords had been und in English rivers, and the scarcity of other kinds of hardware of the :riod in the same waters suggests that these were deliberately left there and ɔt casual losses. Another sword was placed underneath a jetty or bridge ɔutment on the River Hull in East Yorkshire, with cattle, horses, dogs and ɔls: apparently a classic dedication deposit.[148]

97 The fragment of carved Viking cross at Andreas on the Isle of Man, still preserved at the ɹrch, which probably shows the god Odin being devoured by a demonic wolf at Ragnarök.

The pagan Vikings have been charged with the practice of human crifice, and this is supported by an apparent chain of evidence extending e length of Europe. On the River Volga, at its eastern extreme, the Arab ɹveller Ibn Fadlan himself witnessed, and reported in detail, the killing of a ɹve girl at the funeral of a chief of the ‘Rus’ people, as an intrinsic part of e rites. The medieval Christian writer Adam of Bremen wrote a description

a temple at Uppsala in Sweden, at which both humans and animals were fered, and their corpses hung from trees. Bodies which had suffered olent death are occasionally found in Scandinavian graves, placed as parent companions for higher-status individuals who had been laid there st. A classic example of this phenomenon is recorded on the Isle of Man, here the woman put over the grave at Ballateare had suffered a fatal sword ow which had sheared away part of her skull. All this grim data may give a mulative impression that in the case of Scandinavian warriors, at least, is most fearsome of rites is plainly proven; but each piece of it is sceptible to challenge. The 'Rus' of Ibn Fadlan were probably candinavians, but may have been natives of the Volga basin instead. rchaeology has so far failed to reveal Adam of Bremen's temple, and the ality of his testimony, which was certainly second-hand, has been called to question. The bodies with suspicious features in Scandinavian graves uld have been slaves or retainers of the people with whom they were ried, who had died in the same violent event, or criminals who had urdered those people and were executed and thrown into the graves in venge. These same considerations account for the woman at Ballateare, ho could have been a victim of the raid in which the high-status man terred there received a death wound, and a favourite possession or mpanion of his during life. None of these alternative explanations may be rrect, and human sacrifice may indeed account for all or most of these ses; but there is no certainty.[149]

Perhaps most telling is the fact that the British and Irish Christians who pressed such horror at the conduct of the Vikings in general never once arged them with this particular form of atrocity. Instead, the act of ualized violence with which the Scandinavian invaders became associated as that of the 'Blood Eagle', which features in four stories, dating from the elfth to the fourteenth centuries, as a horrific means by which a captured emy leader could be put to death. He was laid on his face, his back cut en, and his ribs and lungs drawn out to resemble the wings of a bird. This as accepted as historical fact until 1984, when Roberta Frank suggested at three of the four accounts actually derived from just one, in the *rkneyinga Saga*, a twelfth-century work. It described how the ninth-ntury Viking Torf-Einar killed a rival for his chieftainship over Orkney, in

is manner, and Frank thought that the account in the saga was based on a isunderstanding of a poem which had celebrated the event, and which was corporated into the saga version and merely told of the dead man being rn by eagles, as carrion, on the battlefield.[150] This led to a debate between ank and Bjarni Einarsson over whether the poem could indeed bear that terpretation, which has ended with other scholars being convinced by one the other. It seems that nobody can be sure now if the rite was ever acted in reality even if it was represented as having been so in the poem; d this situation may make a fitting summation of our knowledge of many pects of Viking religion as practised in the British Isles.[151]

The Nature of Conversion

In the course of the twentieth century, anthropologists and sociologists of ligion developed various models and characterizations of the nature of nversion, many of them based on the observation of Christian evangelism colonial and post-colonial societies. Some emphasized it as a sociological ocess, others as a psychological one, and yet others as one of cross-ltural communication.[152] One strand of thought in this body of research s particular relevance to early historic Britain: that conversion is generally st understood as a multi-stage process rather than an event. A theorist in is tradition, when looking at modern India, summed up the stages as mass ceptance of the new religion, followed by personal education of the nverts in its beliefs and traditions, and finally by the generation of leaders nong the native population eager to administer, enforce and promote it.[153] nother, concerned with the specific case of medieval Europe, produced a fferent tripartite sequence: of social and collective conversion, followed by anges in external individual behaviour, followed by some in internal dividual behaviour. Yet another writer, with the same time and place in ind, suggested that once the rulers and nobility accepted Christianity, the ung were made the next target, and finally preaching was provided for as uch of the adult population as possible.[154] Lesley Abrams has rightly minded us that religion in the early Middle Ages was more an element of oup identity than personal concern or individual choice, enthusiasm with nduct as much as belief, and an aspect of authority and allegiance rather an spiritual conviction.[155] None the less, individual choices and spiritual

nvictions must have counted, otherwise it is difficult to explain why some ople entered monasteries and some did not, and some apostatized from ristianity in changing times and others did not. The real problem is, as dicated above, that the sources available for the early medieval British les are not good enough for us to be able to portray any models of nversion experience in action. We can presume that all or most of them erated, without being able to demonstrate this in detail.

The evidence is, however, adequate enough to fit a simpler formula, also ticulated by Lesley Abrams, which distinguishes between the formal ocess of conversion and the deeper and more transformative one of ristianization which followed.[156] It has already been noted that some glish kings rejected the new religion when they found that it made social ritual demands on them to which they were not prepared to submit. The mbination of material and textual sources does allow at least a discussion ways in which the change of religious allegiances affected society in early edieval Britain. Such an exercise might begin with the use of sacred sites, d a famous letter written by Pope Gregory to a missionary he was sending England in the year 601, as a general statement of policy for his followers that country.[157] He ordered them to purge pagan temples of idols, but if e buildings were sound, to convert them into churches. This directive ade a great impression on the modern British, especially in the years ound 1900 when dramatic industrialization and urbanization had produced great yearning for organic and unbroken continuity with a timeless, rural st. It reached its apotheosis in the work of a medical doctor and keen local tiquary, Walter Johnson, who portrayed an English countryside full of eless landmarks, in which virtually every parish church stood upon a rmer pagan shrine.[158] This belief lingered through the twentieth century, aturing prominently, for example, in the ley-hunting movement discussed rlier in this book. Two sites in particular were held to exemplify such ntinuity, both on chalk hills. One was at Knowlton in the Cranborne Chase strict of Dorset, where a ruined medieval church sits inside a Neolithic nge monument, the other at Rudston on the Yorkshire Wolds, where gland’s tallest prehistoric monolith stands in the parish churchyard. There as also some staying power to a story, current since the sixteenth century,

at St Paul’s Cathedral, in London, was built on the site of a Roman temple Diana or Jupiter.

The true picture is much more complicated. The English parish system as commenced in the tenth and eleventh centuries, long after the nversion period (and was not complete until the fourteenth), and so there uld have been no straightforward transformation of shrines into parish urches.[159] Archaeology has failed to support the story of the Roman mple under St Paul’s, which seems to have originated in a tale put about by e twelfth-century pseudo-historian Geoffrey of Monmouth.[160] As Richard orris has pointed out, the building at Knowlton is not a parish church but a er medieval chapel, in a landscape studded with older churches which are t inside henges. This makes it even more likely that the prehistoric onument was just adopted as a ready-made churchyard; especially since ere were at least two, and possibly three, other henges around it, which the cal people thought nothing of levelling in order to exploit the land for rming. Rudston, according to the name, was a rood-stone, one used as a aft on which to mount a cross as a station for preaching before the church as built.[161] There is no evidence that the pillar concerned was thought to ve any inherent sanctity, as opposed to being a convenient existing mount r a cross head. There seems, in fact, to be surprisingly little evidence that e medieval British regarded megalithic monuments as invested with much iritual significance, positive or negative. What was formerly regarded as a liberate campaign of burial of stones at Avebury in the early fourteenth ntury, inspired by Christian hostility, has recently been shown to have en a casual process spanning centuries, which could be accounted for rely as resulting from the practical motives of removing megaliths that d become obstructions to property owners.[162] There does not appear to be single proven case of the deliberate destruction of a prehistoric monument, cause it was associated with paganism, in the whole of medieval itain.[163] Almost needless to say, no Anglo-Saxon temple has been found derneath any medieval church, because (as discussed above) none has en securely identified anywhere, and some scholars doubt that the early glish ever had them. Jeremy Harte has proposed that Pope Gregory pected England to be like his own Italy, a land still dominated by cities th impressive stone buildings, rather than one in which the towns were

ɾgely ruinous and depopulated, as was the British reality. He seems to have ought that Anglo-Saxon temples would be like the Roman kind, which ey clearly were not.[164]

98 The medieval chapel at Knowlton, Dorset, set within the survivor of a group of Neolithic ıges.

The wider question of whether medieval British churches overlay older ɾuctures is, however, far more complex, not least because the experts draw fferent conclusions. At one extreme was Leslie Grinsell, who could find ıly twelve cases in which medieval churches or chapels definitely lay over beside pre-Christian monuments of any period, in the whole of Britain.[165] ɾ the other was Stephen Yeates, who stated that most (50 to 65 per cent) of e churches established in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire ıd parts of neighbouring counties between the sixth and eighth centuries ere on sites of Iron Age or Romano-British activity. However, he did not ovide the evidence in detail, and stated that some of it was ‘fragmentary’, ıinimal’, or ‘not yet ascertained’. He does not give one proven example of church built on a pagan temple. [166] Experts apparently disagreed over the atter in the same volume of essays: in one such, John Blair declared that ıany’ English churches overlie prehistoric or Roman sites, and Nancy lwards that there is insufficient work to determine whether this statement true. Blair did add that there is not much evidence of actual continuity of

e of places between the pagan and Christian periods, but some of a later edieval interest in putting churches at sites which showed evidence of cient occupation.[167] The sum total of all these different statements is that ere is at present no solid proof that Gregory's directive was put into action, indeed that it was relevant to the English scene, or that any other ristian missionaries in early medieval Britain had a similar policy to that commended by the Pope. As seen, a few Romano-British or post-Roman urches do seem to have been built on the site of temples, but they did not st. There does, as John Blair pointed out, seem to have been a later edieval Christian interest in places which showed traces of ancient activity, t whether these were identified as pagan, or had taken a new place in ristian legend, is at present impossible to say.

At first sight it is much easier to be certain about the impact of the new ligion on funerary customs.[168] Between 600 and 800 cremation vanished, did grave goods save for high-ranking churchmen who were sometimes terred with symbols of their office. Burial took on an increasingly uniform yle, of interment extended on the back, and orientated to face the east, thout ornaments or possessions; and from the tenth century it was stomarily in yards around churches, which became the dormitories of ristians awaiting the Last Judgement. Indeed, there was very little ntinuity of place or of rite, pagan cemeteries usually being abandoned and ristian burial grounds commenced.[169] There are a few complications to is picture. It is now recognized that although Christianity certainly horred cremation, no directives have been recovered which forbade grave ods or ordered that bodies be laid out in particular ways. Moreover, the o centuries concerned represented a long transition period, in which rious hybrid forms of burial were in use. Initially, if grave goods became rer, those that remained became richer. An increasing number of 'bed rials', graves of Christian women laid on beds with valuable possessions, s been found in eastern England. At Northfleet on the Thames Estuary a oup of graves with warrior equipment was identified in 2003, dated to tween 620 and 700. It was probably the resting place of the first nerations of Christianized West Kentish kings or nobles. Even for royalty, rial in churches only became common in the early eighth century. The mulative changes were, as stated, large and unmistakable, but forces in

dition to religious change may account for them. For example, inheritance tterns may have altered to make it more customary to pass on personal ssessions to heirs, while greater trade developed to recycle them and eater industrial processes to absorb used metalwork. The acquisition of riting would have helped ruling elites to say things about the dead in a ore enduring mode than simply leaving objects with them. The use of emation and of grave goods both becoming scarcer before Christianity rived among the English, indicating that its adoption was part of a set of lied cultural processes already under way as the Anglo-Saxon settlers took new ideas and customs from the Continent.

This last point is all important for understanding the impact of the new ith: that it was invariably adopted in the British Isles as one component of extensive cultural package. Harold Mytum and Nancy Edwards have mphasized that in Ireland it represented one aspect of a transformation of e whole of society, in culture, settlement, agriculture and technology as ell as religion, based on new contacts overseas.[170] It was suggested above at among the native British it was effectively part of a second wave of omanization, which is another way of characterizing the situation in eland. Among the English much the same process occurred, the new faith riving with, or in some places after, a switch of fashion away from ermanic styles of good and towards those of the Mediterranean. It was companied by reading and writing, masons and glaziers, new trade routes d – perhaps – new forms of ploughing, lime-production and smelting.[171] hat is less clear is the impact that these changes had on non-religious haviour. Stephanie Hollis has suggested that they reduced the status of omen, by making marital union the dominant metaphor for relations tween the sexes, with wives inferior to husbands and unlike them as ings. By contrast, she finds in the vernacular heroic literature a primacy of nship and comradeship, with differences between the sexes wnplayed.[172] This idea would work, providing that the heroic literature ithfully reflects social reality. Barbara Yorke, by contrast, has emphasized e absence of hostility to women in the writings of English clerical authors tween 600 and 800 and the large number of Christian communities ntrolled by abbesses, suggesting that in England at least the new religion lowed a greater female role in public life.[173] Marilyn Dunn has pointed out

nply that we know so little about the position of women in pagan England at comparisons are largely fruitless.[174]

That problem applies elsewhere in early medieval Britain. High claims ere made at times in the twentieth century for the status of women in Celtic' society, but rested mainly on their representation in medieval ythological literature, especially Irish. Gilbert Márkus has made a olemical attack on those claims, arguing that when mortal women, as posed to goddesses, are portrayed in the texts concerned they exist imarily to establish the legitimacy of menfolk. When they do wield power d influence, they are usually portrayed as villainesses. He suggested that ristianity improved their status, enabling them to dispose freely of operty and to enter nunneries, though they remained legally disadvantaged d disparaged as temptresses.[175] Wendy Davies has suggested that all the tant early medieval sources in Celtic languages portray women as subject men in law and politics, though they had some rights over property. rginity was considered essential for a woman before her first marriage. e Welsh were notably less enthusiastic about female saints than the Irish, e cults of none being recorded in Wales before the eleventh century. avies's conclusion was that not enough data exists to allow of any firm nclusion concerning the effect of Christianity on the status of women in untries with Celtic languages.[176]

If the attitude of early Christianity in Britain does not seem to have been pecially hostile to women, there is no doubt of its suspicion and dislike of x, which it sought to confine to monogamous and permanent marriage thin strict limits of relationship. Men were required to give up their ncubines and sex-slaves, annulment of marriage became extremely fficult, and people could no longer marry their close relatives. Some royal d noble figures found these restrictions irritating, but by the ninth century e Church had apparently won the battle over them among the ruling elite. ow much success it had in the rest of society, or in other campaigns such as nning sex on religious holidays, is less certain.[177] If churchmen succeeded making alpha males more chaste, it did not make them much more aceful, despite sometimes strenuous efforts to limit war. It is possible that e position of non-combatants became safer, and that the foundation of

onasteries to atone for blood guilt by those who had committed homicide hibited blood feuds. The right of the Church to give sanctuary to fleeing iminals and defeated warriors provided another brake on violence; but all ver early medieval Britain, as across Europe, society remained organized ound warfare. Christianity's traditional regard for the poor and ownтrodden may have had some marginal effect, in that kings were now pected to make gifts to the poor, and it was considered virtuous to free aves. Slavery and poverty both persisted, however, and there was no scernible change to the structure of society, while all over Britain royal d ecclesiastical power increased together.[178]

In this area of study, as in others in this book, a general framework can established even though so much of the detail is missing. Martin Carver s pointed to one possible form of this, by reminding us of how many hoes of British prehistory can be found in the cultural forms of the British iddle Ages. The enclosures of monasteries in the north and west of the and echoed promontory forts, while places that used stone-lined graves in e prehistoric period used them in the Christian one. Stone crosses, or llars with inscribed crosses, might have been inspired by standing stones. ne quintessential instruments of the new religion were books, but their corations were based on Iron Age art, and the cult of saints' relics irrored the special ritual treatment given to parts of the human body at any times since the Neolithic.[179] All these comparisons suggest ways in hich the imported faith could be made to seem more familiar, and there is a rallel exercise to be made, in suggesting that medieval British Christianity atched paganism in so many structural respects that it provided a readily lopted substitute for it.[180] To say this is not to deny the novelty of the faith Christ in many key respects. As stressed at the beginning of this chapter, was in many ways a revolutionary form of religious belief and ganization: the point here is that, at a popular level, all this novelty was ediated through forms that made it seem more familiar and acceptable.

There is a reasonably good understanding of medieval British ristianities as a whole, though one which is heavily weighted towards nglish material.[181] A direct comparison with paganisms is difficult to make cause of the lack of evidence for pagan English religious practices.

evious scholars have usually elucidated what evidence does exist by alogy with Continental data.[182] The strategy here is to extend that method comparing the body of information concerning medieval British religion ith that for European paganism as a whole. This is most abundant and well udied in the Greek and Roman worlds, but the authors of the few general orks on paganism across ancient Europe have found many characteristics common between the different regions into which what is known of early nglo-Saxon religion, as said, fits quite well.[183] When that general amework for pagan religion is compared with the specific features of edieval British Christianities, it becomes apparent that the new religion rried over a series of features from the old.

One of those was polytheism. At first sight this may seem a remarkable aim to make for a system which attached such importance to its worship of single true god, even one formed of a Trinity. This monotheism was, owever, much diluted by the cult of the saints, which represented the most tive means of devotion for many, if not most, medieval people. There were ndreds to choose from, ranging from international figures who spanned e Christian world to those who were revered only in a county, district or rish, like Sidwell in Devon, Walstan of Bawburgh in Norfolk or the many trons of Cornish villages. Just as the deities of Greek and Roman ganism (and perhaps all pagans) had done, the saints of medieval Britain ten functioned as patrons and protectors of specific human activities and pects of the natural environment. As such, people might accord them a rmanent personal devotion, but could also approach them for favours in nes of need, according to a saint's individual power and speciality. They ere concerned with trades, age groups, illnesses, genders, nations, regions, rming processes or animals. Some were more overworked than others: aise, for example, was the patron of wool-combers, wax-chandlers, wild asts and sore throats, and Clement of blacksmiths, anchor-makers, onworkers and carpenters. Although their cults were concentrated in parish d monastery churches, they could also be attached to natural landmarks, ove all wells. Those cults were a steadily developing feature of medieval nglish Christianity, which was more prominent in the later Anglo-Saxon nurch than the early one, and still stronger in the later Middle Ages. None

e less, it appeared early and soon attracted a popular as well as an elite llowing.[184]

It does not seem to have derived from a direct transformation of pagan ities. In no known British case was a representation of a goddess or god used as a Christian icon, as happened in a few celebrated cases on the ontinent such as at Enna in Sicily where the Madonna and Child had been lt statues of Ceres and Proserpina, or the Virgin of Chartres, which was ken from a pagan altar.[185] Nor are there any apparent parallels in Britain to e manner in which Irish divinities such as Brigid and Goibhniu have been ought by scholars, at least in the past, to have been refashioned as ints.[186] The medieval British cult of saints, therefore, was not a ristianization of pagan deities, but a provision of new figures who offered parallel service. By the end of the Middle Ages, most parish churches ntained shrines dedicated to saints who were not their patrons. Many were aintained by guilds of laity who paid a subscription to maintain a priest to ay regularly to that saint to intercede on their behalf, both before and after ath. All but the very poorest members of society could afford to belong to ese.

A second familiar feature of ancient religion which was reproduced in edieval Christianity was that seasonal festivals were the most important rms of ritual observance. Services were indeed provided each Sunday here there were churches, but not until the Reformation were effective ws passed to compel people to attend them, even though from Anglo-xon times most work was forbidden on that day.[187] The events that owded out churches, and on which most care and expenditure were vished, were the spectacular feast days positioned at key points of the nual calendar. By the later Middle Ages they included the dawn service on ristmas Day, in a church lit by many candles and decorated with holly and y; the blessing of candles at the beginning of February, as part of a liturgy hich celebrated the power of light to drive back dark; the consecration of ring foliage on Palm Sunday, and its fashioning into protective crosses; the ama of the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Day, a consecrated host and ucifix normally being brought out of a miniature tomb in which they had en placed and guarded since Good Friday; the Rogation processions to

ess the growing crops in May; the parades that celebrated Pentecost, with a hite dove released or a model one suspended from the ceiling of the nave symbolize the Holy Ghost; and the prayers for the dead and the ringing of lls to comfort the congregation at the feasts of All Saints and All Souls at ushered in the dark and dead time of year. For most of the time, the urch was regarded as a house of the deity, in which a priest or priests kept gular worship going without the need for a congregation; although the rsonally devout, and those in need, were of course welcome. This seems have been very much the pagan pattern.

The Christianization of pagan festivals was a much more regular and equent occurrence than the Christianization of pagan places and deities, t it was not an automatic and comprehensive one. The solstices certainly came the feasts of the Nativity and of John the Baptist, while the quarter y that opened winter was (from the ninth century onwards) appropriated r All Saints. The greatest of all Christian festivals, Easter, was, however, d not to any pagan celebration but to the Hebrew Passover, and ershadowed the major pre-Christian feast of May Day so much that the ter was given only two minor apostles. In Ireland, the traditional quarter y which opened spring was indeed allotted to that land's favourite female int, Brigid. Elsewhere, however, it became prominent in church liturgy ly because it almost coincided with the major Christian celebration of the rification of the Virgin Mary, which had enabled Christ's salutation as the viour of Gentiles as well as Jews. What happened in general was that asonal themes were interwoven at festivals with key messages and ssages from the Bible, to express both to maximum effect. It was an propriation of traditional ways, as much as an adaptation to them.[188] For nturies the English Church maintained a distance, often disapproving, om secular revelry such as May games, summer feasts, the crowning of ock monarchs to preside over seasonal celebration, and collections by oughmen to open their heaviest season, in January. In the late medieval riod, however, it incorporated these as well, by converting them into echanisms to raise money for the upkeep of religious buildings and rites. rish officers, at least in the south of Britain, would organize seasonal lebrations, with traditional pastimes and entertainments, to which rishioners paid admission, and the profits were put towards the expenses

their church. In rural communities – and the village was the standard cial unit of medieval and early modern Britain – these celebrations came the normal means of raising funds for the repair and improvement of e building and its decorations, and the trappings and commodities of rvices.[189]

Medieval British Christianity also resembled the older religions in the ace that it provided for women. Divine female figures were amply presented by saints, and above all by the Virgin Mary herself, who made effective queen of heaven. Human women had their own religious houses, d came to feature as celebrated mystics, such as Lady Julian of Norwich. ccasionally they served as churchwardens, and were admitted to most rish guilds on an equal basis with men and sometimes served as officials them; while many such guilds were reserved exclusively for women. All is had the effect of erecting a thick screen before the apparently equivocal maleness of the single true deity. A fourth major continuity with e old ways was that the central religious rite was sacrifice: that of the ass, offered up at an altar as the old animal sacrifices had been. The major npowering motivation of paganism, the propitiation of deities with gifts, d been succeeded by one in which the deity offered himself as the crificial being; a concept which the evolving doctrine of transubstantiation ade vividly real. The lesser sacrifices offered by paganism, of incense and owers, remained in churches as accessories to ritual. Preaching, a stinctive Christian contribution to the religious mainstream, continued to popular throughout the Middle Ages, being mostly carried on by friars in e later centuries. It was not, however, essential to the practice of the ligion in the way that the consecration and communion of the mass were. general, parish priests were not expected to preach, and their most portant role was to enact regular rites for the good of the community, in e manner of pagan priests and priestesses before them.

In this context, it becomes important to emphasize how much the otestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation had in mmon, as reform movements directed against medieval Christianity, and pecially at its popular manifestations. In many key respects they were terly different, and bitterly opposed, forms of religion, but both were signed to achieve better control over general religious observance and to

ıpose a greatly enhanced level of education, uniformity and active lay
ety. This is where historians of a previous generation, such as the French
holar Jean Delumeau, deserve a fresh consideration, for arguing that the
ıristianity of the early modern period was significantly different from that
the Middle Ages.[190] It represented a fresh and strenuous attempt to
culcate at a popular level what devout churchmen had always held to be
e key tenets of Christianity, and in the process to remove from the practice
religion many elements that perpetuated or resembled pagan forms. The
ınsition was especially intense in Protestant nations of the kind that
:otland, Wales and England became, where it involved the abolition of the
ass, the cult of the saints, and the seasonal rituals, and the substitution of a
ligion based on preaching, compulsory Sunday attendance and a far more
ale-centred concept of the divine order. One argument of this book,
›wever, is that apparent religious change, incremental or radical, is inherent
the story of Britain from deep prehistory. There are fewer fundamental
ıanges in the form of ceremonial monuments between AD 600 and 1600
an there were in the fourth millennium BC; and if Christianity continued to
'olve and alter, in belief and in its physical expressions, throughout its
ıcient and medieval periods, then the material evidence for ritual, at least,
ıd shown the same or greater mutability throughout the previous four
ousand years.

7

THE LEGACY OF BRITISH PAGANISM

The Pagan Middle Ages: A Question of Definition

THE QUESTION OF how far paganism survived clandestinely in Britain ter the conversion to Christianity is one that is now rarely discussed by ecialists in medieval history, for two reasons. One of these is the breadth research needed to give it a satisfactory answer, for it cuts through all ree of the conventional divisions of the Middle Ages – early (*c.* 500–)66), high (1066–1300) and late (1300–1485/1500) – and requires ference to legal records, theological tracts, ecclesiastical decrees, chaeology and religious art and architecture. In all these areas, it demands e assimilation of a large amount of new, and ever-accumulating, material. ıe second reason for the current neglect is that the answer to the question is)w generally assumed to be obvious, and firmly negative. Such an attitude in large part a reaction against a scholarly tradition which dominated for ost of the twentieth century, and has now collapsed. Between the 1880s ıd 1960s there was a very strong disposition among experts to believe that ıristianity represented no more than a veneer over medieval British ciety, concentrated among the elite and barely penetrating the mass of the)pulation, which continued to adhere, for all practical purposes, to the old ligions. It was summed up perhaps most eminently by the great historian monasticism, Geoffrey Coulton, who claimed that ‘in church, the women owded around Mary, yet they paid homage to the old deities by their ghtly fireside, or at the time-honoured haunts, grove or stone or spring’.[1]

Research has only just begun into the impulses that lay behind early ventieth-century British attitudes to the Middle Ages, but some preliminary ggestions might focus on two particular factors.[2] One is the sense of ienation and fear experienced by many educated Europeans between 1880 ıd 1940, on finding themselves in charge of two new and frightening forms mass population: the industrial and urban working classes and the subject

oples of colonial territories. A view of civilization as something spread ecariously over a populace which is essentially alien to it, disaffected from and secretly loyal to more primitive, destructive (and in some ways more citing) instincts, runs through the literature of the age. The other factor nsists of a growing disenchantment with conventional and traditional rms of Christianity. At times this resulted in a desire to dilute them rather an abandon them, by mixing in elements from other religions, including rieties of paganism. At others, the same disenchantment manifested as tright hostility to Christianity. It was clearly satisfying to those possessed it to see the Middle Ages, traditionally regarded as the greatest epoch of rvent Christian faith, apparently being revealed instead as a time in which ost people secretly revered pagan deities. It was furthermore a means by hich modern urban intellectuals who rejected religion could mock the norance of the rural working class, the natural repository of backwardness d superstition.[3] One aspect of this kind of medievalism should be phasized here: that the evidence which underpinned it was mainly derived t from a study of medieval records themselves but from other sources: om modern folk customs, from early modern and later written texts, and om the physical remains of medieval buildings. The nature of this evidence ll be considered more closely below; for now, it is proposed instead to ask hat data does exist that could indicate the presence or disappearance of tive paganism in the British Middle Ages.

It may be suggested that there are two principal bodies of evidence, hich derive from opposite ends of the period. The first consists of the law des issued by the Anglo-Saxon (or later the Anglo-Scandinavian) kings, d the contemporary edicts of English church councils. Those from the late venth century, as Christian kings ended the former toleration of continuing gan worship among their subjects, certainly forbid the old religious ways mprehensively. However, none of those from the eighth century does so, d indeed those that attack non-Christian practices – the *Dialogue* of gbert, archbishop of York, composed around 750, and the third decree of e Council of Clouesho in 747 – are primarily concerned with divination d the use of amulets. In other words, they deal mainly with what might be rmed folk superstitions and operative magic rather than an actual religion. gbert's *Dialogue* does also forbid the worship of idols, but this seems to be

the context of consulting soothsayers, indicating that to resort to vination of the future is itself to worship devils.[4] All this accords with the ıpression strongly given by a more famous English text of the mid eighth ntury, Bede's *History*, that paganism was no longer an active and dependent force by that time. It is one reinforced as the century continued, a report by papal legates on England in 786 and a commentary on English fairs by the great expatriate churchman Alcuin in the period around 800. ıe legates were concerned with pagan influence only in residual customs ch as eating horse meat or mutilating horses (the significance of these acts ıt being explained), tattoos, and divination by casting lots. The latter ndemned divination as well, in various forms, plus acts of Christian orship outside churches and the wearing of protective amulets which ntained biblical passages or saints' relics. Much of this consisted of the licing of specific types of Christianity which were based on pagan stom.[5] There was a further flurry of prohibitions of pagan worship in rthern England in 1000–2, issued by Wulfstan, archbishop of York, as scribed earlier and aimed at the new influx of Viking settlers. In the early 20s King Canute reissued these as part of a law code for his whole realm, ıt after this nothing more is heard of the problem.[6] This would accord with e impression given by all the other sources, of a relatively swift and easy sorption of the Scandinavian newcomers into Christendom.

The body of evidence from the other end of the period consists of the cords of secular and church courts, which in England are relatively entiful for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and deal routinely with atters of religious heterodoxy as well as all manner of other criminal and oral offences. They certainly reveal a persistent condemnation of the tablished Church, covering most of its core doctrines and institutions. lthough expressed by a small minority of the population, concentrated in rtain central and southern districts, it was determined and enduring. istorians have adopted for those who articulated it the contemporary usive term of 'Lollards'. These were, however, not pagans but the direct posite: very devout Christians who happened to disagree profoundly with e interpretation of Christianity made by medieval Catholicism. In addition e same records contain an equally persistent number of cases of dividuals who mocked aspects of Christian piety. They were even fewer

an the Lollards, belonged to no continuous and articulated rival tradition, d did not argue for any alternative system of religion: they were either ocking the pious or else expressing scepticism regarding the value of any ligious faith. What the court records also embody very strongly is the nse that unorthodox religious or moral beliefs held by individuals reatened the whole community to which they belonged, by rupturing its lidarity and tempting divine wrath upon all. It was therefore the duty of dinary people to spy on their neighbours, or remember conversations with em at social events, and report any suspicious words or actions in order to aintain communal safety and health.[7] A typical and humdrum example of is effect at work would be the case of Margery Northoll, a young widow ho was sued for breach of promise at Bristol in 1539. There were witnesses testify to all of the key words and actions of Margery and her jilted fiancé each of the three successive stages of their courtship, even when they had ade efforts to be alone.[8] It is difficult to imagine how, in such a world, a rsisting pagan religion could go completely unreported. The nearest to any pression of one in the whole of this great mass of material is the case of o Hertfordshire men who were accused of declaring that there were no ds but the sun and moon. They were, however, not suggesting that these ould be worshipped but – if the charges were true at all – fall into the tegory of those who cast doubt on the efficacy of religious belief in neral.[9]

Such records are much fewer for the other parts of medieval Britain and e Isle of Man, but there are some equivalents, even if a slightly later period eds to be drawn into the picture to provide some of them. Law codes exist r Wales from the tenth century onwards, and show no greater evidence of e surviving practice of pagan religion.[10] Nor is it mentioned in the scription of his country in the twelfth century by Gerald of Wales, who tes several curious and aberrant Christian religious customs there.[11] The k of material comparable to the medieval English legal records is medied from the sixteenth century by very good equivalents, for all but the rth-west of the country, featuring both criminal and civil trials; from hich, again, self-conscious paganism is missing.[12] The same is true of the anx legal archive, which has a complete run of criminal cases from the late xteenth century, and of church court hearings from the late seventeenth,

hich do contain much information on magical practices and fairy lore.[13] o Scottish historian seems yet to have detected references to surviving ganism in the laws issued since the union of that kingdom in the ninth ntury. The role played by the church courts in England is taken in Scotland om the late sixteenth century by the records of the kirk sessions and esbytery meetings of the newly established Protestant national Church. hese are a profitable hunting-ground for historians of popular religion, and pecially for those aspects of it of which reformed orthodoxy disapproved; t for the Lowlands there is apparently nothing in them concerning ybody who practised paganism as a rival system to Christianity.[14]

The Highlands are slightly different, because of two tantalizing entries. he is a condemnation made in 1656 by the presbytery (the regional church ard of government) meeting at Applecross, the place on the north-west ast where Maelrubha had founded his monastery in the seventh century: a onastery which had been abolished, along with the saints' shrines and cult, the Reformation. It condemned a group of Highlanders for sacrificing a ll, walking sunwise around chapels left ruined by the reformers, and ing to learn the future by inserting their heads into a hole in a stone on aelrubha's feast. Divination was always a contentious area for rigorous urchmen, as it was often believed to indicate a lack of submission to the vine will. Perambulating holy places sunwise was part of Gaelic Catholic dition, and certainly a custom inherited from prehistory (for which see hapter 4 above) though firmly Christianized. The charge of animal crifice is of course the most interesting one, and it was repeated by the ighbouring presbytery of Dingwall in 1678, when it accused a family of ackenzies of sacrificing a bull at a formerly famous healing shrine dicated to Maelrubha. The object of this act was to restore the health of e grandmother of the family; the presbytery denied that it was offered to e actual saint and declared that instead it was intended for a 'St Mourie' or en 'a god Mourie'. Its members were apparently unaware that Mourie was e of the local forms into which Maelrubha's name had become rrupted.[15] It is possible that both records testify that in these mountains of ester Ross the fact that Christian saints performed similar roles to those of e old deities had resulted in animals being sacrificed to the former as they d been to the latter. On the other hand, cattle were the major currency of

e district, and the animals could have been offered merely as gifts to a rine in exchange for saintly favour, in a wholly orthodox medieval ıristian manner (but one still anathema to Protestants). What is entirely cking, in both cases, is testimony from the people who carried out the acts ıncerned, providing a reason for them; and as a result we can never be sure ow accurate the charges were. There was certainly a clash between edieval and reformed Christianities involved in both, but the true gnificance of it is probably beyond recovery.

From the centuries between the early law codes and the later legal cords emerge just three incidents which could be interpreted as evidence r pagan cults in Britain. The first occurred at the Scottish seaport of verkeithing, at Easter 1282, when the priest allegedly gathered small girls om the neighbouring villages and made them dance around a statue of ıcchus with him, while he carried a wooden image of the male genitals and ged them to indecent actions and language. When some of his parishioners ıjected, he just became more obscene, and his critics seem to have been too ıwed by his authority to make a complaint. At the following Easter – the ıxt occasion on which he would have encountered his parishioners en asse – the report went that he did not repeat this stunt but tried another: hen people gathered at his church to do penance, he got some to prick the hers with goads. The burgesses of the town then turned upon him in ıtrage, but he refused to listen to them and was knifed to death that night. ıe chronicler who recorded this episode stated specifically that the priest as 'reviving' pagan worship rather than carrying on established tradition, ıd regarded it as a shocking, and unique, event. If the facts were as they are ıted – and we cannot test the accuracy of any – then the clergyman ıncerned looks like an isolated lunatic.[16] So does the protagonist of the cond incident, at Bexley in north-west Kent in 1313. There one Stephen le ope made images of pagan gods and set them up and worshipped them in s garden; his next act, however, was to murder his maidservant.[17]

The last example is the only one to involve an actual cult, of a sort: at ithelstock Priory in the Torridge Valley of North Devon in 1351. There the onks established a chapel near the monastery with an image in it which as supposed to represent the Virgin Mary but which the bishop of Exeter at e time thought more resembled 'proud and disobedient Eve or unchaste

iana'. He ordered the building and its contents to be destroyed. Nicholas rme has considered this case in detail and concluded that the real source of e prelate's wrath was that the chapel had been built without his permission, d was used as a source of income for the monks. They did so by attracting lgrims to it and offering to tell their futures: this was of course divination, at old area of temptation, and moreover people were supposed to go on lgrimage to pray for healing and remission from sins, not to predict their stinies. It may be that the bishop's fulmination against the image was spired by the fact that fortune in love was one of the particular services ovided by the divination racket; in addition he clearly thought that monks ould not be worshipping the Virgin outside their own priory at all.[18] He as certainly exceptional in that his energy, severity and intolerance nerated a thick register of interventions, of which this was but one. Yet ain, the episode cannot be taken as evidence for a surviving pagan ligion.

It may therefore be concluded that the paganisms of early historic Britain ed out soon after forms of Christianity were accepted as the official ligion of its component states, without leaving any lingering resistance ovement or organized tradition of continued allegiance to the old deities in position to that to Christ. Historians of the Middle Ages who have read rough the last few pages may well wonder why such a conclusion needed be reached afresh at all: they may well have had the impression of atching an examination of an obviously dead and decomposing corpse, ith the intention of checking anew for any signs of life. What needs to be preciated is that the concept of a surviving medieval and early modern ganism in Britain, in the sense stated above, is not only very much still esent in some areas of popular culture, but – as will be seen below – is metimes still expressed by practitioners of allied scholarly disciplines. rthermore, there is another sense in which pagan survival, or more operly survivals, can quite legitimately and successfully be traced through e Middle Ages and beyond. This is the sense which inspired the title osen for a collection of essays edited by Ludo Milis in 1991, *De heidense iddeleeuwen*, and translated into English in 1998 as *The Pagan Middle ges*. Milis and his colleagues could find no trace of an active and self-nscious paganism surviving in Europe after conversion to the Christian

ith had taken place: in particular, they could not find any continuing legiance to the old deities in preference to Christ. What concerned them stead was the large number of pagan rites, usages, ideas and festivals hich were absorbed into forms of Christianity, or into popular superstition ith an ill-defined line between the two). They found that medieval people eserved aspects of the old religions which fulfilled functions for which ristianity did not cater or with which it was not concerned. Those nctions often consisted of active solutions to specific earthly problems, ch as spells, charms and other magical remedies, which continued to exist parallel with official Christian doctrine, sometimes condemned by the aders of Church and state, but more often tolerated.[19]

Over the past forty years, this aspect of medieval culture has received a owing amount of attention, although more from Continental than British holars. The earlier results of this prompted John van Engen to ask again hether the Middle Ages had been ‘a flourishing epoch of Catholic ristianity or a millennium of Indo-European folklore?’ His answer was at they had not been a golden age of Christian piety, but that their culture as still a Christian one, even deep in the countryside. He also noted that ne of the common factors in this earlier research was the belief that ristianization was most profound in the upper ranks of society, and that it as popular religion that showed the largest number of pagan trace-ements.[20] Van Engen himself had doubts about this, and it is a concept hich will be challenged here. The main thrust of the argument against it is t that ordinary rural people were more piously Christian than has been ought, though that is indeed true and has been well made for Britain by me of the works that have underpinned earlier passages of the present ok, such as those of Eamon Duffy. It is that surviving elements of ganism could be found at every level of society.[21]

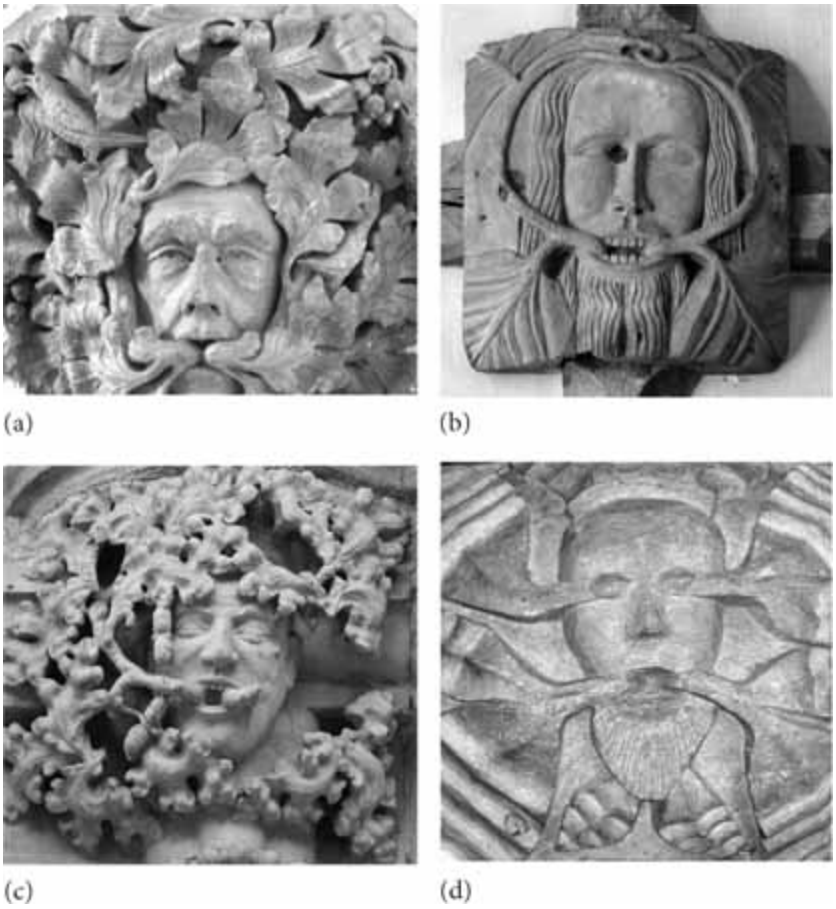
It is easy to perceive that the faith of Christ had to take on physical ppings from the world of paganism: after all, it emerged into that world as set of sacred writings with a rapidly developing theology and body of remony attached. To develop as a public religion, it took over from pagans forms of sacred buildings and the use of clerical costume, altars, incense, usic, veils and cloths, and decorative foliage, as well as the seasonal

stivals considered earlier. However, it transformed these, and poured into em the radically new form of religious thought and behaviour discussed ove. For that reason, a consideration of pagan survivals is better directed aspects of the ancient inheritance which were less completely assimilated to the new faith. Four categories of those were identified as especially gnificant in a predecessor to the present work: learned ceremonial magic; pular magic or 'cunning' craft; popular rites, especially at seasonal stivals; and the general love affair that the Christian centuries carried on ith the art and literature of the pre-Christian world.[22] What follows here is consideration of the way in which those categories have overlapped and terrelated, which also provides an opportunity to distinguish what may be rmed clear instances of survivals from those which are now doubtful or sproved.

Church Images

It was the Egyptologist, and prominent member of the Folklore Society, argaret Murray, who in 1934 drew attention to the figures carved in British urches as evidence for an active surviving paganism in the Middle Ages. particular, she focused on the occasional representations of naked women ith spread legs, which had become known to scholars by the Irish folk ckname of sheela na gigs. These she interpreted as icons of fertility ddesses, installed in Christian buildings because their cults remained so rong among ordinary people.[23] It was almost certainly her example which spired another member of the society, Lady Raglan, to propose a similar rpose for the much more common medieval church decorations of foliate ads, surrounded by and disgorging leaves. She conflated these with the getation-clad figure from English May processions, called the Jack in the reen, to suggest that they represented enduring reverence for a pagan rtility god. To this entity she gave the term, taken from a common pub sign owing a forester, of the Green Man.[24] These interpretations of the two pes of figure continued to be proposed all through the middle years of the ntury. In 1973 the pioneering scholar of Iron Age and Romano-British ligion, Anne Ross, contributed an essay which restated the view of the eela na gig as proof of the living cult of a pagan goddess.[25] Two years ter, she and Ronald Sheridan not merely repeated as fact the idea that

edieval grotesque art represented enduring pagan deities but added further nds of image to the list and accused academic scholars of ‘almost a nspiracy of silence’ in refusing to integrate this truth into general histories the period.[26] There was, of course, no such conspiracy, but a lack of cused and sustained research. In its absence, popular culture readily sorbed the concepts published by the writers cited above, especially Anne ss. The sheela na gig became a potent symbol for feminist artists in the 80s and the Green Man an icon of the environmental movement. As such, th turned into important and dynamic modern images.[27]



99 A sample of Green Men:

(a) in the parish church at Sutton Benger, Wiltshire

(b) in the parish church at Sampford Courtenay, Devon

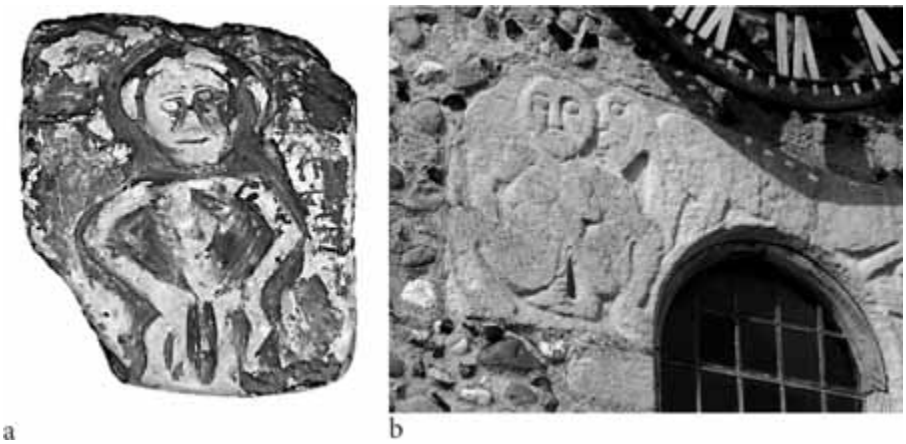
(c) in Ely Cathedral

(d) in the parish church at Spreyton, Devon

It was only in the 1970s that sustained scholarly investigation of the gan interpretation of medieval church images commenced, and the terpretation rapidly collapsed. Lady Raglan's composite figure of the reen Man was dismantled component by component. In 1979 Roy Judge oved that the Jack in the Green had no connection with the church corations, but had evolved out of a London chimney sweeps' dance in the e eighteenth century.[28] From 1978 onwards, Kathleen Basford, Rita ood, Mercia MacDermott and Richard Hayman showed between them that body associated the foliate heads in medieval churches with paganism fore the twentieth century. They appeared mainly in buildings mmissioned by members of the elite, rather than those in which common ople had influence, and were especially popular in the later rather than the rlier Middle Ages. There are few ancient precedents for them, and these ow leafy faces, rather than faces gushing foliage from mouth and nostrils the medieval manner. The first appearance of this form was in fact in anuscripts produced in tenth-century monasteries, from which it spread to urches in the twelfth century; and it is possible that the ultimate source for lay in India, from which it was transmitted to European culture through the rab world.[29] Between 1977 and 1986, Jörgen Andersen, Anthony Weir and mes Jerman similarly reviewed the sheela na gig, revealing that this image peared in eleventh-century France and Spain as part of a new repertoire of coration associated with the evolving style of art and architecture called omanesque. From there it spread quite rapidly to England, where its pularity peaked in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and then to Ireland d Scotland. In England it did not enjoy the continued and increasing terest that the foliate heads received in the late medieval period. Its rpose, taken in context with the other forms in the repertoire, seems to ve been to warn against the horrors and temptations of carnal lust, for hich the repulsive nature of the image, and its focus on often enlarged and stended female genitalia, would be appropriate.[30] The most famous sheela gig in Britain is probably now that in Kilpeck church, on the central plain Herefordshire: it was indeed the type specimen used by Margaret Murray underpin her original theory. Now, however, the church is known to have en built and decorated at the behest of a recently arrived Norman lord, a

urtier and royal official who imported masons working in the new omanesque style.[31]

When all this recent work is reviewed, it remains true that there are some ther large loose ends still lying around in it. Brandon Centerwall has drawn tention to the existence of figures actually called Green Men who appeared Tudor and Stuart pageants and entertainments, as leaf-covered men rrying clubs. They also feature on sixteenth-century wooden fittings in one urch and one cathedral. Their association seems to be with drunkenness, irroring the traditional use of a branch or bush as a sign for the sale of cohol, but how they relate to the foliate heads, if at all, we do not yet ow.[32] Moreover, we still do not really know what the foliate heads emselves signified. One way to discover the answer may be to examine e medieval English sermons and devotional works systematically to cover possible references to the motif, but there is no sign as yet that this terprise will uncover any. A more general enterprise, of seeking meanings r leaves and greenery in medieval religious symbolism, yields too broad a sult, for to some commentators in the period they equated with the tanglements of sin, and especially lust, and for others with the special es of the Garden of Eden, and for yet others with self-sacrificing love, lvation, immortality or resurrection, while foliage sprouting from faces uld suggest decaying corpses and the consequences of sin or the utability of life.[33] It may be that the best way of understanding the motif is look at it in specific contexts. At Kilpeck, for example, Richard Hayman s noted that foliage generally represents the snares of Satan, entangling d distracting the humans portrayed with it.[34] Sally Mittuch observes that aves dominate the eastern walk of the cloister at Norwich Cathedral in a ttern which suggests the journey of the soul after death, through a forest wards salvation; in which case the Green Men in the scheme would be lost uls.[35]



a b

c

100 The Sheela na gig:

(a) A typical specimen, from the parish church at Eastnor, Essex, showing all the usual aracteristics of physical ugliness and the absence of distinguishing features other than the display of huge vulva.

(b) A more unusual example, from the parish church of Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire, which acts a coping stone to a twelfth-century window on the front of the tower, with which it is contemporary.

e style of the female figure herself is normal, but with her is a rarity, a male companion, proaching her in a state of sexual excitement. It was concealed by whitewash for centuries, and covered in the late nineteenth century.

(c) The largest example surviving in Britain, on the exterior of the church at Oaksey, in the upper ames Valley at the far north of Wiltshire.

As for the sheela, it has always been noted that this figure enjoyed a eater popularity in Ireland than in Britain and was made there for longer, to the later Middle Ages. The Irish examples, moreover, were increasingly aced in positions which the human eye could not see, and on secular uildings such as castles rather than churches, especially in Gaelic areas. ney may be linked in such contexts to a tradition recorded in much later sh folklore, by a German traveller in the 1840s, that misfortune (in neral) could be averted by the display of a woman's genitals.[36] Here there ight be a direct relevance to surviving ideas from ancient paganism, which uld be associated with goddesses, as a few scholars have indeed suggested recent years.[37] In other words, in this specific case, Margaret Murray and nne Ross may have been correct, and especially the latter, who drew most her material from Ireland. It is also possible that the image itself derives timately from pagan Egyptian prototypes, though this is unproved and the ristian use of it was quite different.[38] None of these reflections does ything to rescue the use of medieval church carvings as evidence for a ntinuing and active paganism in medieval Britain.

Labyrinths and Giants

Rocky Valley is one of those narrow defiles that run inland from the rth Cornish coast, with the craggy flanks which gave it its name but also sh vegetation especially rich in spring flowers. In this it is typical of the all valleys of the district. What gives it distinction is that on one of its ck faces is carved a pair of labyrinths, of the 'classic' ancient kind with a ngle track running in successive loops to the centre and then out again. xed to the rock beside them is a notice of green and white metal, installed the mid twentieth century, declaring that they probably date from the rly Bronze Age. For many this sign has become evidence in its own right, at labyrinths were carved in British prehistory; and this might be the actual

ıth. On the other hand, nobody seems to have noticed the carvings until)48, and the idea that they are ancient was propagated by a national wspaper, the *Illustrated London News*. It is a little worrying that Cornwall s abounded with scholars interested in its monuments for about three ndred years, and not one seems to have come across the Rocky Valley byrinths before the 1940s. It is impossible to date them from their degree weathering, though the slight apparent degree of this, when they were cised in soft shale rock, might argue that they are relatively recent.[39] They e certainly the only examples of this motif being carved on a rock face in itain: the abundant incised symbols of the British Neolithic and Bronze ge include many concentric circles and spirals, but not a single labyrinth.

This case sums up the problem of British labyrinths in general.[40] The mbol is certainly ancient, being known both in Syria and Greece by the irteenth century BC. By the beginning of history it had a strong association, legend, with dancing, and also with the hero Theseus, who was said to ve slain the Minotaur, a human-eating monster with a man's body and a ll's head, inside a labyrinth. This association does not entirely make sense, cause the Minotaur was kept in a maze, a bewildering complex of many thways, most of which led to dead ends, and not in a unicursal labyrinth; t none the less it stuck. By about 600 BC the motif had reached Italy and it came popular with the Romans: examples found in Sardinia, Spanish alicia and the Italian Alps may all be prehistoric, but may equally well ve been carved in Roman times. The labyrinth is also a great modern mbol, which burgeoned in popularity during the late twentieth century, pecially in America. On both sides of the Atlantic, clubs, magazines and tworks of enthusiasts have been dedicated to making and discussing them, d modern labyrinths, in Britain as elsewhere, are now important symbols, ligious monuments (Christian and non-Christian), and works of art. Built to much of this movement is a belief, or assumption, that the symbol ncerned was known and used in northern as well as southern Europe in ehistory.[41] That belief may be correct: but thus far it is unproven.

The Romans certainly carried the image to many parts of their empire, king it as far north as the Danube Valley and Gaul, but there is as yet no gn that they brought it to Britain. From Roman culture it was taken into

ristian churches, including eventually the great French Gothic cathedrals, d into medieval illuminated manuscripts. Its meaning in Christian contexts not entirely certain: at times it is explicitly attached to the Theseus legend, ving pictures of the Minotaur inside, while at others it is described as presenting the winding path of life, and at yet others worshippers used to alk it, when it was set into a pavement, for penitential purposes, reciting ayers to expiate feelings of sin or guilt. It seems as if the legend started the e of the design, as one associated with the slaying of evil, and that it was er given other meanings and uses. In addition, it is recorded in nineteenth- ntury British folklore, as a magical shape chalked on doorways so that evil irits, trying to enter, would be confused and deterred. A famous group of byrinths, numbering hundreds and laid out in stones, survives in candinavia around the Gulf of Bothnia, and especially in Sweden. In their sign, they match those in late medieval Swedish church frescoes, which metimes show girls dancing inside them, but there is no proof of when ey themselves were made, or for what purpose. There is one carved upon a ehistoric standing stone in the Wicklow Mountains of Ireland; but there is certainty that the carving is of the same date as the erection of the stone, d indeed it was first noticed in 1908. As the monolith stands alongside hat became a medieval pilgrimage route, the design may have been added it by Christians.

In Britain, labyrinths are represented mostly by a group constructed of rf on village greens or on hillsides near towns. These are uniquely English ith an isolated one of stones in the Isles of Scilly), and ten survive out of a own previous total of thirty-nine, the most famous and popular being at e market town of Saffron Walden in the north-west Essex farmlands. They ere certainly made from the late Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, hen their construction by both gentry and common folk is well recorded. he earliest actual reference to one is in Geoffrey Chaucer's poem 'The egend of Ariadne', in the late fourteenth century. Unfortunately, none can t be dated from the surviving structure itself, so the tradition of producing em could have commenced in prehistory or at any time thereafter up to haucer's own. Their use by Tudor times is documented: they were the tting for sports and dances as part of summer games, as Shakespeare dicated when he wrote of 'quaint mazes in the wanton green'. Fairly often,

Britain as in Scandinavia, they were known as ‘Troy Towns’, a reference Virgil’s ancient Roman poem the *Aeneid*, which remained a favourite ece of literature during the Middle Ages. There a turf or stone labyrinth as used for what was called ‘the Game of Troy’ in which young men rode und on horseback, turning their steeds skilfully around it. By Virgil’s time was long established as a favourite pastime of aristocratic Roman youth. ıe vagueness of all this can be put down to the lack of sustained and ofessional scholarly study of these monuments, because of disciplinary ıditions: historians have tended to assume that they come down from ehistory, while archaeologists do not find them on any British site which n be dated before the late Middle Ages, and so ignore them. Only one itish formation that has been interpreted as a labyrinth has been stematically investigated by archaeology, and it was never recognized as ıe until the mid twentieth century and never firmly accepted as such by ther historians or archaeologists. It is also now the most famous among itish and American pagans and New Agers: the spiral labyrinth on the amatic conical hill in Somerset known as Glastonbury Tor.

It was the great novelist and ritual magician Violet Firth, who wrote ıder the name Dion Fortune, who first drew attention to the terraces on the ɔr, which had hitherto been presumed to have been medieval field systems. the 1930s, she had a vision in which they became a sacred processional ay made by refugees from Atlantis. This was brought down to earth by a rmer colonial from Ceylon called Geoffrey Russell. In 1969 he suggested at the terraces were a giant labyrinth, which he first thought was medieval, ıt later believed were more likely to have been prehistoric. Geoffrey Ashe, e eminent writer on Glastonbury, accepted the terraces as a huge, and therto unsuspected, ancient monument, and Philip Rahtz, a distinguished chaeologist, put on record that he thought this possible. The Tor was omptly adopted as one of the main sacred monuments of the rapidly owing community of people who had moved into the town dedicated to e practice of ‘alternative’ forms of spirituality.[42] Archaeologists in general nored it, as there was no known prehistoric structure which resembled it in e whole of Europe, though the excavations at Silbury Hill, undertaken in e 2000s, threw up the idea that Silbury might have been built with a spiral alkway ascending it. No examination was therefore made to test the reality

the Tor labyrinth until 2004, when the National Trust, which has custody the hill, needed to renew the paths and gateways upon it, and invited lastonbury's resident archaeologists, Nancy and Charles Hollinrake, to ake a proper survey of the terraces. They found that these were indeed man-made but had until recent times been discontinuous, not one circuit them having linked up to make a pathway. They seem instead to have en medieval field systems, as had traditionally been supposed, similar to hers surviving in that part of Somerset and probably made during the irteenth century, when a rapidly expanding population was creating acute nd hunger, and Glastonbury Abbey was engaged in ambitious building and ainage projects. No proper excavation was undertaken to confirm this date, t fragments of medieval pottery were found in one terrace.[43] The labyrinth the Tor does not, therefore, seem to be an ancient sacred structure, but it certainly now a modern one, converted into a huge open-air temple in the e twentieth century and consecrated by the feet of thousands of devotees. s such it performs a religious function extremely well, and deserves the spect that is accorded to any site of which that is true, old or not.

101 Glastonbury Tor labyrinth, visible as concentric terraces on the side of the steep, conical hill.

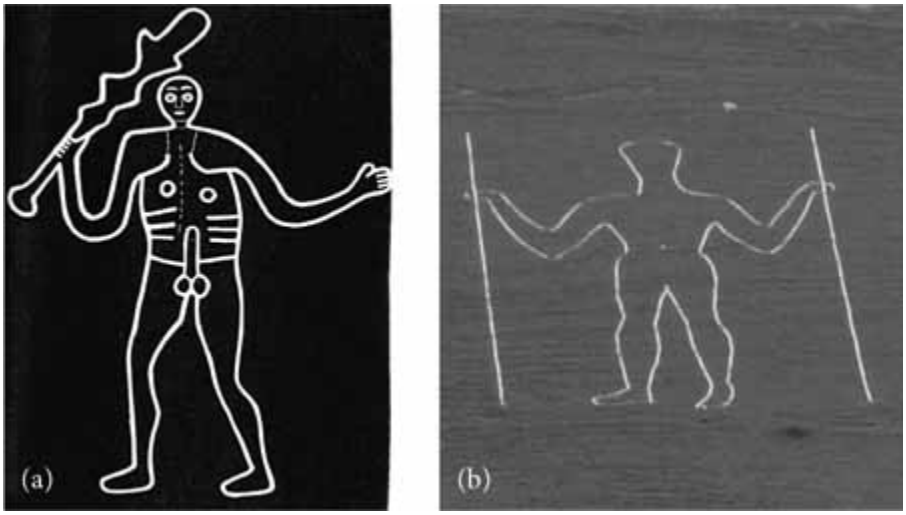
All this uncertainty over the age and nature of British labyrinths relates rectly to the question of pagan survivals. If medieval British people who nced or played games in the turf structures were using monuments which

d been established in their land in prehistory, and perhaps doing so in nilar ways, then this is site continuity of the classic sort. If, on the other nd, the turf structures were translations, into secular use, of an image und in churches, and brought to Britain by a Christianity which had propriated them from an ancient Mediterranean legend, then it is not. The me sort of consideration applies, with equal intensity, to carved figures on alk hillsides. One of these, the Uffington White Horse, has (as said) now en firmly proved to be prehistoric. The other white horses which decorate essex scarps, and a few other motifs found on southern English downs, are certainly modern, though precise dates for the creation of two-thirds of e horses are lacking and one or two were made from older figures (though e do not know how old).[44] It is in the gap between the definitely ehistoric and the definitely modern that those which have most relevance the question of pagan survivals reside.

Two in particular have attracted attention in this respect, because they e the two human hill figures which have been thought to represent possible gan deities. One, the Long Man, occupies a hillside of the South Downs ove the village of Wilmington in Sussex, and its name is well earned by its ight, of 231 feet (or over 70 metres). Its masculinity is less certain, for it is mere outline, with no positive indications of sex, and its main stinguishing feature is that it holds a line, possibly representing a stave, and or edge of a door, in each hand. It has, however, been significantly ered by successive ‘restorations’, and the details of its original form are certain. Far more robustly delineated is the Cerne Giant, on a slope above e small town of Cerne Abbas in the north Dorset hills. He is 180 feet (55 etres) tall and unquestionably male, with a complete set of genitals cluding a 30 ft erect penis, though this has been elongated in relatively cent times by engulfing the navel. He brandishes a club, and once had a in draped over the other shoulder with some kind of head attached; which akes it probable – though not certain – that he represents the classical hero ercules.

For most of the modern period, scholars considered it most likely that e Cerne Giant was ancient, and the Long Man ancient or early Anglo-xon.[45] This possibility has an obvious bearing on the question of pagan rvivals, because if both were indeed originally images of pagan deities,

eir preservation through the Middle Ages argues that some reverence for ose still persisted in their localities. The stakes are raised in the matter by e fact that both lay on or close to major medieval highways and both were rectly above important monasteries, Cerne Abbey and Wilmington Priory, that the monks would either have had to collaborate in their continued istence or been repeatedly thwarted in attempts to eradicate them by the votion of local people. Since the 1990s, doubt has increased as to whether her existed before the early modern period, and the two have become a ntrasting pair, in a somewhat frustrating way. The Long Man now seems have a scientifically determined date, but no known context for nstruction, while the Giant seems to have a good context for construction, t no proven date.[46] In 2003 a television production jointly sponsored by e Open University and the BBC2 television channel put up the money for excavation on the hillside below the Long Man. This showed that a great al of activity had taken place there in the early modern period, with a rticular concentration in the mid sixteenth century, and very little before en. It strongly suggested that the figure was first made then, without solutely proving the fact. No investigation of the history of the district has nce been carried out with a view to determining any possible candidates r those who would have sponsored the work. If the Long Man is indeed ıdor or Stuart, then the most likely identity for such a figure is Christ ening the doors of salvation; but this is mere speculation.



102 The two surviving hillside giants:

(a) The Cerne Abbas one, as mapped out by Sir Flinders Petrie's survey in 1926: on the ground viewed across the valley) the figure is foreshortened.

(b) The Long Man of Wilmington, photographed from the floor of the valley below, and so (in ntrast to his Cerne Abbas fellow) showing the foreshortening effect resulting from an actual, restrial, view.

Nobody is ever likely to identify the Cerne Giant as Christ, but he may Oliver Cromwell. The first certain reference to his existence is in 1694, d there are none before then, despite the survival of a relatively large mber of Tudor and early Stuart travellers' accounts which describe the ea, and an unusually rich set of estate records for Cerne Abbas dating tween the thirteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including a rticularly detailed survey of 1617. Joseph Bettey has made a case that the gure was cut in the 1650s on the orders of the local landowner, an nbittered former politician called Denzil Holles, to satirize Cromwell, then e ruler of the nation and known to some admirers as the British Hercules. deed, in the following century the steward of the manor told a Georgian holar that it was 'cut out in Lord Holles's time'. All this is highly ggestive, though no objective tests for dating have yet been carried out on near the Giant himself. The present state of knowledge and opinion only akes it impossible to use the two great hill figures as certain evidence for a rviving loyalty to paganism in the English Middle Ages. What they should , instead, pending a proper and direct dating of both, is redirect attention the place of giants in the late medieval and early modern English agination. The most common form of hill figure recorded in Tudor and uart England was not a horse but a huge human, lost specimens of which isted at Oxford, Cambridge and Plymouth. By treating these hillside rvings as relics of a prehistoric past, historians have effectively neglected em, even though it is clear from what is already known that giants in neral were major figures in early modern English culture. They were part folklore, mythology, religious tradition and national epic, and featured ominently in municipal and guild processions. It is time that we reunited e material and literary evidence to give them a proper history at last.

Trees and Waters

A theme that is emerging from this chapter is the manner in which an sociation of certain kinds of material evidence with pagan survivals has rved to delay the proper investigation and understanding of them. That eme is sustained in the case of natural features in the landscape. The point s already been made that the prehistoric British almost certainly, and the omano-British, Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavian settlers in Britain quite rtainly, attached a religious significance to particular trees. What seems to ve happened subsequently is that this pattern continued, but not by direct nsference: rather, in this respect as in others, Christianity established a rallel belief system. Medieval literature identified the sweet apple as the e, and its fruit, as the most numinous of all, especially associated with radises and enchanted lands. Chris Lovegrove, however, has argued that th this association and indeed the cultivation of apple orchards themselves ere medieval phenomena, not known in ancient Britain.[47] The history of e yew is more complex. Modern authors had always recognized its special sociation with churchyards and the precincts of abbeys, and during the entieth century, if not before, an assumption grew up that this must derive m a proportionate sanctity in pre-Christian times.[48] This received a new petus from the 1980s onwards as a result of the work of a visionary, Allen eredith, who had experienced dreams which convinced him of the great e of yew trees and their powers of wisdom and healing. These launched m into a long and praiseworthy programme of recording data on them, pecially their measurements. He convinced nationally eminent figures ch as Alan Mitchell of the Tree Register and the media botanist David llamy that a method could be constructed for calculating the age of dividual trees from their growth rates, which indicated that some yews ere much older than had been thought. The oldest, in fact, had been alive r millennia.[49] By the mid 1990s his ideas were coming close to being cepted as at least a popular orthodoxy, and inspired further works upon the cient sacred significance of the tree.[50] At the least, it now seemed to many ople that yews had been especially venerated in pre-Christian times, and at their presence in Christian churchyards was a strong indication, if not oof, that those sites had been foci for religious activity for thousands of ars on end: living proof of continuity of sacred place between different ligions. David Bellamy, indeed, took to issuing certificates of age for old

ws, to be hung in churches next to them, and 130 of these make the tree ncerned older than the establishment of Christianity.

In 1996 Jeremy Harte took a look at the evidence for such ppositions.[51] He pointed out that as the rate of growth of the species is ieven, there is no foolproof method for the calculation of the age of any of specimens. This throws the historian back on archaeology and historical xts as sources for the matter. The latter show that ancient Mediterranean ltures regarded evergreens as trees of mourning, planted in cemeteries as mbols of continuing life and hope for an existence after death. As such, ristianity, emerging from those cultures into northern Europe, brought the me belief, and focused it especially on the yew as the single evergreen hich grows to impressive size and flourishes in those latitudes below the nifer belt. There is absolutely no doubt of its association with Christian urchyards in the British Isles from an early date, attested both by written cords and material remains: the name Iona, indeed, is probably derived om 'yew island'. What is much more difficult to prove is a connection with cient paganism. Early Irish law codes define the sweet apple and the hazel sacred trees, but not the yew. Plenty of yew trees grow over ancient mains, but there does not seem to be a single case of ancient remains being nstructed to pass over the roots of a tree.[52] Subsequent research has done thing to add to or subtract from Jeremy Harte's case, despite the most instaking efforts.[53] It remains impossible to date yews, and although each cade produces more and better evidence of the importance of the tree to rly (and subsequent) forms of Christianity, no special connection between and paganism has yet been demonstrated. The matter remains open, and e most important effect of the debate may have been to highlight the need the growing sub-disciplines of landscape archaeology and landscape story to incorporate individual species of trees into investigations more ten than has been done hitherto.

The situation is rather similar when dealing with sacred waters. There is course ample evidence for the importance of these in pre-Christian itain, while the cult of holy wells, usually associated with individual ints, was a major feature of the Middle Ages. The problem, again, is one direct connection between one and the other, because there are very few

early proven cases in Britain of a piece of water which was the centre of ual behaviour before the conversion to Christianity remaining as one ereafter. The most spectacular of the island's springs, the hot group at Bath hich had been the focus of the worship of Sulis Minerva, sum up the certainty which generally hangs over the matter. It is true that from 675 wards the ruins of the Roman city were reoccupied and the first of a series important Anglo-Saxon monasteries established there. What is harder to termine is whether any religious cult was centred upon the springs emselves during the Middle Ages, as both material and textual evidence r one seem to be missing.[54] Likewise, while the large number of doubted medieval holy wells embodied an attitude to water which was elf ancient, so far there is evidence that only a very small number were emselves a focus for ritual before a Christian cult developed there. In this in other respects, the new kind of religion seems mostly to have offered a rallel service to the old in Britain, rather than adapting places, figures and es directly. Admittedly, systematic research into the matter has only just gun, and has been pioneered, like that into church carvings, yew trees and byrinths, mainly by good scholars outside the academic mainstream: in the se of the wells, most notably James Rattue and Jeremy Harte.[55]

Just one well, at Low Leyton in Essex, has yielded evidence of pagan tive offerings followed by a medieval cult: and given its (so far) unique ture, its Christianization might have occurred in ignorance of the earlier tivity rather than inspired by it. A dozen more English medieval holy ells occur in association with early Anglo-Saxon activity, or Romano-itish remains, or suggestive early place names, and so are probable ditions to the record of continuity. This is not a large total out of about ne hundred that are known to have attracted reverence in England during e Middle Ages. The distribution is an odd one, with most medieval holy ells in the Midlands and West Yorkshire and fewest in the south and east, pecially East Anglia; which is not a map of Celtic culture, population nsity, pagan place names, or springs in general. Anglo-Saxon churchmen ndemned the worship of wells by pagans rather than recommending them r Christian use, and such disapproval continued later into the Middle Ages. seems to have been largely if not completely ineffectual, for the tablishment of new saints' wells went on all through the medieval period,

d the particular patrons chosen for them merely reflected the popularity of ose saints at the time. The wells had little association with healing, but nctioned as shrines or chapels, especially as alternative foci for devotion to metimes distant parish churches.

Likewise, rivers continued to be used as repositories for what look like ual deposits, but not generally at the same places or of the same kind as fore. The badges worn by pilgrims who had visited saints' shrines, for ample, were regarded as objects of inherent sanctity and protective power. s such they were nailed up in homes, or fixed on doorways or put under undations of houses, cowsheds and beehives to protect them; but they ere also placed in wells and at river crossings, presumably to enhance the wer of the former to bless, and to make the latter safer.[56] The most markable example of ritual continuity of deposition in rivers to date was entified by David Stocker and Paul Everson along the central Witham alley in Lincolnshire.[57] Here causeways led from ten medieval monasteries wards the river; these were probably first constructed in ancient times, as ehistoric and Romano-British finds are common along the line of them. eposition continued near most of them all through the Middle Ages, pecially of swords, daggers, axe heads and spearheads, which were laid river of the causeways or in pools nearby. In three cases the medieval ds outnumbered the prehistoric, and in general those left between the eventh and fourteenth centuries were more numerous than those of the nglo-Saxon period. Stocker and Everson remark that as the crossings were ntrolled by monks, and the deposits peaked with the power and influence the monasteries, 'clearly, the practice had been Christianized in some ay', but there is no textual evidence to tell us how.[58] Pilgrims, religious ocessions and funeral corteges would all have passed those points, going or from the religious houses, and it is likely that the placement of objects water was associated with such events. In particular, the two chaeologists pointed out that the deposition of weapons declined when the stom of hanging military equipment around tombs became fashionable. In at case, it may have been the weaponry of dead lords that was cast into ater as their bodies were taken for burial at the monasteries; and so the oment when Excalibur was cast back into the lake may actually have

flected contemporary medieval custom, rather than a memory of ehistoric ritual, or even the finding of ancient swords in watery places.

All told, the cases of trees and waters do suggest a continuing reverence r both on either side of the change of religion; but the evidence for a direct nsference of it in specific cases is weaker than has often been supposed.

Medieval Celtic Literature

It was stated in the fourth chapter of this book that medieval Irish and elsh literature represented two of the four kinds of source which were utinely used in the twentieth century to evaluate the material evidence for ual in the British Iron Age. The two others, classical Greek and Roman erature and the images and inscriptions from Roman Britain, have now en considered at some length. It is time to look at the medieval Celtic xts, and explain why they were not employed earlier. Those from Ireland e of relatively small importance to the British context, even though they e much more numerous than the Welsh, and many self-consciously portray pre-Christian society, with a pantheon of deities and a few descriptions of ligious or magical rites. Their changing status as historical sources, wever, does need some consideration as it has relevance to that of the elsh equivalents.

Between the mid nineteenth and late twentieth centuries, it was esumed that the medieval texts which portrayed a pagan Ireland had iginated in pre-Christian times and been preserved by oral tradition until ey were written down after the coming of Christianity. As such, they were ought to have been preserved by an elite of bards whose technical training d social position had, like their tales, survived the process of conversion most unchanged. In the ringing words of the celebrated mid-twentieth-ntury scholar of Celtic languages and literatures Kenneth Hurlstone ckson, they provided ‘a window on the Iron Age’.[59] By the 1980s ecialists had doubts about this assumption. The medieval Irish epics owed none of the familiar textual features of orally transmitted stories parent in other early literatures such as the works of Homer. At the same ne archaeologists were discovering that the royal seats which featured in e stories certainly existed in pagan times, but not as the residential halls rtrayed in the epics. They had instead been complex ceremonial centres,

ten open to the sky. The medieval authors had either drawn on an oral adition which preserved a sense of their former importance, but not of their rm or purpose, or were inspired to imaginative reconstruction by the sight their physical remains. The buildings, dress and war gear of the epics ere those of the Middle Ages, not the Iron Age, and the animals described them include some species never found in Ireland and others introduced ter the coming of Christianity.[60] Medieval Irish writers were trying to create the glories of their pagan and ancient past to produce an epic erature that could rival that of pagan Greece and Rome, which was nerally admired throughout Christian Europe. In doing so they drew on a eat deal of native tradition, but we have no real idea of how much of this nsisted of authentic memories of the prehistoric past, and how much had en invented for lack of such memories.[61]

The cumulative effect of such doubts can be seen in a series of atements from experts in the years following 1990. In 1992 J. P. Mallory mmed up an emerging consensus among archaeologists when he declared at 'in general, no matter what games one attempts to play with the data, it impossible to make a convincing Iron Age date' for the *Táin bo Cuailgne*, aditionally regarded as the most archaic of the Irish epics.[62] Four years er one of the most famous proponents of the old tradition of using edieval literature to reconstruct Iron Age religion, Proinsias MacCana, mitted gallantly that by then experts in Celtic studies were unable to agree on the extent to which that literature could be accepted as a reliable index native religion and mythology.[63] Things moved further over the next cade, so that by 2008 Raimund Karl could state that 'the general nsensus' in Celtic studies now seemed to be 'that the Irish heroic tales … e little more than medieval authors' creative paintings of how they agined the Irish past to have been, telling us, if anything, more about the rly medieval Irish present than about a distant pagan past'.[64] Karl himself ded that he completely agreed with this, but suggested that the texts could used as analogies, some of which might be homologies. In other words, here features of the stories seemed to accord with actual Iron Age remains, ey might be taken as possibly accurate representations. The problem is, of urse, that there is no way of demonstrating that the apparent similarity is

ot a coincidence; and Karl himself limited his own exercise to social ructures and customs rather than religious behaviour.

Irish literature has sometimes been made directly relevant to the study of itain, in that some scholars have linked deities found in it to British mes, to suggest that they represented the same pan-Celtic deity: examples this will be considered below. More generally, the same trajectory that has aracterized the use of the Irish texts as windows into a pagan past has been atched by that of the Welsh; though the latter were always less amenable to e task than the Irish, and the doubts over their fitness began to be pressed much earlier. For one thing, the surviving body of Welsh medieval itings is much smaller than the Irish, and it makes very little comparable empt to reconstruct a pagan world. Some of the tales in it, the Four anches of the Mabinogi, are apparently set in a pre-Christian past, but ere is no attempt to portray the religion of that time, save that characters casionally make pious exclamations which are wholly compatible with ristianity. Instead, the Welsh material has been studied for possible plicit, or even unconscious, references to or survivals from ancient ganism. This process began in the eighteenth century, when the growth of terest in the Druids, as potential spiritual ancestors of all the British oples, triggered interest in the medieval Welsh texts. After all, the Welsh ere ethnically the direct descendants of the native British, and there was a ance that their medieval poems and tales did indeed preserve echoes of uidic teaching.

Attention focused on two collections of poems, those credited to the gendary bards Taliesin and Myrddin, who entered the Arthurian cycle as e wizard Merlin. Both were believed to date from the sixth century, around even before the time of the conversion to Christianity, and abounded with scure passages which might credibly be deciphered as concealing Druidic isdom. The exercise of decoding this wisdom, commenced in the middle of e Georgian period, took off properly at the opening of the nineteenth ntury, only to receive a check in its middle decades from Thomas ephens and David Nash. They pointed out that, from internal references, me of the poems concerned seemed to have been composed as late as the irteenth century, and that none could be securely dated earlier than the nth, which made the transmission of Druidic teaching in them much less

ɛely. They proposed also that the texts concerned seemed to have been ɔmposed as entertainments, and not as expositions of religious belief.[65]

The debate over those criticisms lasted for almost a hundred years, with e proponents of an earlier date for the poetry more inclined to defend that edited to Taliesin rather than that attributed to Myrddin. It was apparently ıded in the mid twentieth century, when Sir Ifor Williams ruled that the ıly poems in the 'Taliesin' corpus which could have derived from the sixth ntury, and Taliesin himself, were a dozen which dealt with kings and ttles. Those in the 'mystical' category were all later.[66] In recent years ere has been a tendency to push the dates of composition for the Welsh erature which has been most often examined for traces of paganism even ter, to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. None of these ascriptions, ɔwever, are secure, and some poems have been placed by different scholars various points between the years 700 and 1130. This renders impossible e work of putting the different texts in a chronological succession, so that e development of characters and motifs can be traced between them. ırthermore, the stories and personalities in them must in at least most cases ve been in existence for an entirely unknowable span of time before the tant literary works were created.[67] All this is highly relevant to the fact at from the late nineteenth century onwards authors seeking references to ganism in the literature were preoccupied not so much with finding ruidic teachings in it as with identifying former deities who had been ınsformed into characters in the stories. Four in particular were ghlighted.

The first is Mabon son of Modron, whose name on the surface means ıe son of the mother', but, as the -on suffix is derived from a Celtic one pecially associated with deities, seems to signify 'the divine son of the vine mother'. He features in the medieval literature as a great huntsman, d perhaps as a warrior, while his mother bears other sons to another hero. 1888 one of the great pioneers of Celtic philology, Sir John Rhys, entified Mabon as the god Maponos or Maponus, and Modron as the ɔddess Matrona, deities attested by inscriptions and reliefs in Roman itain and Gaul. His argument was based on the linguistically solid rivation of the medieval from the ancient names. This idea was taken up

d repeated throughout the twentieth century by a succession of major holars, one of whom, the American Roger Sherman Loomis, made odron the original for the character of Morgan la Fee in the Arthurian cle. The problem is that not a single ancient inscription identifies aponos as the son of Matrona. The latter was the goddess of the River arne, in north-eastern Gaul, and there is no trace of her in Britain. The ple goddesses known generally as the Matres, discussed earlier in this ook, were also sometimes known as the Matronae, but not in Britain, and ey never seem to have been associated with the river goddess or Maponos, indeed with any son. Maponos is recorded both in Britain and Gaul, but ough the British references are more numerous they are all in military ntexts, while the Gaulish inscriptions, though fewer, are the work of vilians. It is therefore difficult to locate his point of origin. In Britain he as treated as a patron of music and in Gaul as a general protector, but where as a hunter. It seems impossible to prove that the medieval Mabon d Modron originated as the ancient Maponos and Matrona, and the doubted linguistic connection of the names is a puzzle rather than a means saying anything useful about either Roman Britain or medieval Wales. me of the earlier tendency of scholars to give importance to Modron as a eat mother goddess derived from the modern wish to believe in such a ity as a universal focus of worship in the ancient world.

The second character is Nudd, who features mainly as the father of two table heroes, and is significant in modern scholarship because his name is guistically cognate with those of the Roman-British god Nodens, attested Lancashire and at Lydney, and Núadu, who appears in Irish medieval erature as king of the supernatural race called the Túatha Dé Danann, nerally accepted as former pagan deities. He has also been equated with o other (and separate) characters in the Welsh stories called Lludd, one of hom bore Núadu's epithet of 'silver hand'. It was Sir John Rhys, again, ho blended all of these as the same god, and all or most of his attributions ere frequently accepted during the twentieth century. It is, however, possible either to reconstruct with confidence the attributes of Nodens or prove that his cult was the only or main one at Lydney, and so to use atures of the temple there to construct an identity for him as a divinity. It n only be said that he was identified with the Roman Mars, as a general

otector-figure, especially in war and farming. None of the associations that n be recovered for him makes any reference to the distinctive features of e medieval legend of Núadu, while the latter bears no more than a perficial resemblance to that of either Lludd. The epithet ‘silver hand’ uld simply have been transferred from Irish to Welsh storytelling during e Middle Ages. Núadu and Nud were fairly common personal names in rly medieval Ireland and Wales, respectively, but what connection this has the fictional characters, and how they do relate to each other, seem at esent to be questions beyond convincing resolution.

The Welsh literature contains various characters named Lleu, Llwch, och or Lluch, of whom by far the most important is Lleu Llaw Gyffes, eu of the Skilful Hand, a handsome prince in the Fourth Branch of the abinogi who suffers various tribulations before becoming ruler of wynedd, north-west Wales. It was (of course) Rhys who deified him, awing on the work of an equally eminent Frenchman, Henri d’Arbois de bainville, published in 1884. This linked together four hitherto separate ople and places: Lug(h), who was leader of the Túatha Dé Danann after úadu in the Irish epics; an unnamed god whom Julius Caesar had said was e most popular in Gaul and equated with the Roman Mercury; a set of ities called Lugoves, found in Roman-period inscriptions from Spain to witzerland; and the ancient name for the Gaulish city of Lyons, ugudunum’. De Jubainville argued that all testified to the existence of a ajor ancient deity called Lugus, who was venerated across the whole ltural world which scholars at that time were starting to characterize as eltic. Other authors swiftly took up this idea and began finding Lugus hind other Roman towns with names commencing in ‘Lug-’ or ‘Luc-’, om Britain to Germany, and in the other Welsh characters with similar mes to Lleu. This process continued through the first two-thirds of the entieth century; and indeed, the belief in a pan-Celtic god called Lugus came one of the props of the concept of a pan-Celtic family of peoples, d culture, in the ancient world.

From the 1990s questions began to be raised, in passing, about aspects of is construct. In 1996, for example, Bernhard Maier attacked the equation Caesar’s ‘Gaulish Mercury’ with Lugus, and pointed out that the place mes associated with the latter need have no connection with him and that

o-thirds are only attested in the Middle Ages. In fact the problem is worse an that, because behind the place names could lie a variety of words mmencing in ‘lug’, ‘leu’, ‘lou’ or ‘luk’ in early Celtic languages, gnifying a raven, a dark place, an oath or vow, or light, bright or shining. avens almost certainly gave Lugudunum, alias Lyons, its name, because e ancient symbol of the town was a raven or crow. There is not a single finite dedication to a god Lugus across the whole of his presumed range. stead there are those to the ‘Lugoves’, a plural form which gives no dication whatever of the nature of the deities concerned, or even of their x: it was goddesses, and not gods, who were most often found in multiples the ancient world. In addition, Galicia and Provence have inscriptions to e ‘Lucubes’, who were probably male and may have been the same gures. So, the bonding of all these shadowy deities, the place names and e medieval Lugh and Lleu into a single mighty god is still possible, but w seems only one option among a number of choices. The only certainty the cognate relationship between the names Lugh and Lleu, and the still ore telling fact that the Irish god and the Welsh prince bear the same ithet, of ‘Skilful Hand’, even though they are utterly different as aracters. The epithet, however, could have crossed the Irish Sea in the iddle Ages, while the name could have done so in the early first illennium, before sound-changes separated the linguistic forms.

Finally there is the figure of Rhiannon, perhaps the most famous female aracter in the whole of medieval Welsh literature, who features in three of e Four Branches of the Mabinogi. She comes from a supernatural herworld, riding a white horse which cannot be overtaken by any mortal eed, and marries the human prince of Dyfed. As his wife, she suffers an just accusation, for which she is punished by being forced to carry rangers into her court upon her back. Her innocence is proved by an tsider, Teyrnon, and she is reinstated, only to suffer a further indignity at e hands of an enchanter, being forced to wear the collars of asses, before ing rescued from this humiliation in turn. It was Sir John Rhys once again, the 1880s, who started the work of turning her into a pagan goddess, conded in the years around 1900 by Sir Edward Anwyl, who argued that e names Rhiannon and Teyrnon could have derived from a pair of constructed Celtic originals, *Rígantona and *Tigernonos, signifying

spectively ‘Great (or Divine) Queen’ and ‘Great (or Divine) Lord’ (the terisks customarily indicate hypothetical words reconstructed by modern ilologists): once more the concept of an ancient Great Mother Goddess as an explicit influence in his thought. These ideas were accepted and gmented for the next hundred years, with an increasing emphasis on hiannon as a horse goddess, being either a British equivalent to the ontinental Epona, or even Epona herself. In the 1970s she was blended ith concepts taken from medieval Irish legend to turn her into a goddess of vereignty as well.

In the past few decades a few cautionary notes have been sounded ncerning this whole construct. It has been pointed out that there is solutely no ancient evidence for a cult of *Rígantona and *Tigernonos, d that all that Rhiannon and Epona have in common is a horse. Jessica emming has emphasized that magical steeds which move at uncanny paces e found elsewhere in medieval literature, and just indicate the general ceptiveness of enchanted realms. She has also proved that Rhiannon’s nishment, of being ridden, was both a motif in international folk tales and actual penalty in medieval Europe. Andrew Welsh has analysed the otifs in the Four Branches, and found that none of those in the stories hich feature Rhiannon are distinctively ‘Celtic’, all occurring ternationally. These insights can be extended. The whole concept of a overeignty goddess’ is based ultimately on Irish tales composed after the ar 1000, originally to bolster the claims of a single dynasty: there was not single kingdom in the whole of ancient Europe and the Near East in which uler is actually recorded as commencing his reign by a rite of marriage to goddess. There is no trace of a widespread cult of Epona in Britain, which uld have left a lingering popular memory, as discussed earlier, and no lid evidence for a native British horse goddess. The divine origin of hiannon, therefore, is unproven, as is that of the other characters nsidered above. Readers are free to decide for themselves where they wish stand, on a spectrum of response stretching from a continued acceptance such an origin for some or all of these figures (but now as just one ssible interpretation of the evidence) to abandonment of it as a waste of ne and a preference to concentrate instead on an understanding of what the xts concerned would have meant to their medieval audiences.[68]

A similar conclusion can be proposed for the figure of Ceridwen, though r scholarly trajectory has been somewhat different. She features, as eridfen', 'Ceritven', 'Kerritven', 'Kyrridven' or 'Kerritwen', in some of e 'mystical' poems accredited to the great legendary bard Taliesin, as a use who confers the gift of inspiration upon Welsh bards: these texts have e language and diction of twelfth- and thirteenth-century court poets, hough it is possible that they incorporated some older material.[69] Her role giver of inspiration seems to derive from her part in the story of the birth r rebirth) of Taliesin, who had been her servant. As a mighty enchantress, e had brewed a cauldron containing a potion which conferred great isdom and magical and creative ability, from which he had accidentally unk and gained the full benefit. She had then pursued him in a series of fferent animal shapes before eating him, only to become pregnant with m and give him back to the world with the same remarkable powers. She one of the great characters of world literature, along with Lleu and iannon, and deserves to move and inspire the imagination to this day, and r very many to come. Although full versions of this story exist only in xteenth-century texts, it was certainly known much earlier, in the time of e poets who hailed Ceridwen as a muse or before. Some of the characters it, with the relationships they have there, are named in the Welsh Triads, vices to aid poets to remember and classify aspects of tales which had en put together by 1200. Moreover, for the rest of the Middle Ages Welsh rds referred to episodes from the story.[70]

Nobody seems to have thought that Ceridwen had been a modern ddess until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when a clergyman lled Edward Davies joined a contemporary trend, among devout ristians, of attempting to defend the literal truth of the Book of Genesis gainst the questions that had begun to be raised about it by the developing iences of geology and palaeontology. One of the favourite devices of this hool was to find apparent references to Noah's Flood in the mythologies of fferent nations, and Davies applied it to a reconstruction of ancient British ligion. His material for this was drawn from medieval Welsh literature, and pecially from the 'mystical' poems credited to Taliesin. One of his most fluential conclusions was that Ceridwen had been the presiding goddess of itain, the Great Mother of all creation, whose body had represented the

rth. This was an early appearance of the need to conceive of a single Great oddess, related to motherhood and the natural world, in the nineteenth-ntury imagination. As part of it, Davies transformed the name of the aracter from the medieval story and poems into its enduring modern form, eridwen', which carried connotations of beauty and adoration.[71] His idea as repeated as 'generally considered' to be fact in Lady Charlotte Guest's nglish translation of the main medieval Welsh prose tales, *The abinogion*, in 1849.[72] This carried it to a vast audience, far into the entieth century, being taken up by famous creative writers such as Robert aves and becoming a significant part of modern popular culture.

Among scholars of Welsh literature, however, the idea of Ceridwen as e Great Mother fared rather less well, as Davies's reputation for holarship crashed in the mid Victorian period, when critics such as omas Stephens and David Nash challenged not only the conclusions that had drawn from his sources but his ability to read Middle Welsh.[73] As a sult, the late Victorian enthusiasm for finding pagan deities behind aracters in the medieval literature tended to pass Ceridwen by, and in the id twentieth century one of that age's leading Welsh scholars, Sir Ifor illiams, had no time for the idea that she had been a goddess. He derived r from the character in the Taliesin story, and argued that her original me had been 'Cyrridfen', meaning 'crooked woman', which would suit e nature of the sorceress whom that character represents. These ggestions were accepted by other famed experts in the literature ncerned, such as Rachel Bromwich.[74]

On the other hand, a few archaeologists continued to represent the pular view, in detachment from that of literary specialists. In 1967 Anne oss suggested that pagan goddesses 'seem' to lurk behind the chantresses of medieval Welsh fiction, including Ceridwen.[75] The latter sappeared from prominent books on Iron Age and Romano-British deities the 1980s, such as those of Graham Webster and Miranda Aldhouse-reen.[76] None the less, in 1995 the latter scholar declared, without arguing e case, that Ceridwen had been 'almost certainly a goddess'.[77] At first ght that statement, and one made by the present author four years earlier ith an argument), that 'she fairly clearly was not' a pre-Christian deity,

ay appear to be polar opposites.[78] In fact they occupy different points in e same category, of acknowledgement that the matter is doubtful. There is erefore every potential for people who wish to see Ceridwen as a deity as a atter of personal choice to continue to do so. What is certain is that to do is wholly to make a back-projection from medieval literature, and that ere would not be such a propensity to make it now were it not for a ristian fundamentalist from the Regency period, Edward Davies.

Other characters from the Welsh poems and stories can be submitted to e same process, and have been (as the reference to Anne Ross has dicated), although not to the same degree as those discussed above, and ith equal indeterminacy. That process can also be applied to physical jects. Miranda Aldhouse-Green has made a fine study of the place of uldrons in the Welsh and Irish literature, where they are repeatedly sociated with death and regeneration. She has plausibly suggested that ey had the same associations in pre-Christian times.[79] The problem is that uldrons were prestige objects in the early Middle Ages as well as in ehistory, and that their connotations in medieval myth and legend may not ve been the same as those in the earlier period. A major scholarly industry as developed to detect possible traces of paganism in the medieval rthurian legend, which grew ultimately out of Welsh tradition. Edward avies, again, got things started by declaring that Arthur himself had been a n god, and between the mid nineteenth and the mid twentieth centuries st-rank academic authors on both sides of the Atlantic, such as Sir John ys and Roger Sherman Loomis, devoted much energy to finding other ch connections. So did writers from outside the university system, or on e fringe of it, such as Alfred Nutt and Jessie Weston.[80] In the later entieth century, this activity waned sharply in professional Arthurian holarship, although it has persisted outside that.[81] The problem is that the otifs, characters and actions which have been identified as deriving from e-Christian religion were collected as isolated details from all over the dy of medieval Arthurian literature, and frequently from the late medieval mances, in various nations and languages. They are not more numerous in e earlier texts – indeed, the reverse is usually true – and are not found in rtain traditions as a coherent body which can be shown as developing into ore Christian forms, or disappearing, as the medieval period wears on.

By now it is plain that any attempt to find pagan survivals in the aracters and motifs of medieval Welsh literature is fraught with problems, a way that was not apparent for most of the nineteenth and twentieth nturies. Stepping back from the detail, however, it immediately becomes parent that much of it, and that of medieval Ireland, contains a major ement which could well be a bequest from a pre-Christian age. This is the esence of a supernatural otherworld, populated by beings similar to mans but with magical powers and eternal youth, which regularly teracts with the human one to which it acts as a parallel realm. In Ireland is was, in one of its manifestations, the home of the Túatha Dé Danann, hile in Wales it was commonly called Annwn or Annwfn. It becomes ghtly more assimilated to Christian cosmology as time goes on: in the urteenth-century poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym it is much more clearly an derworld, with demonic overtones, than it is in the (almost certainly) elfth-century Four Branches of the Mabinogi, where it seems to exist in a ighbouring dimension. None the less, as a realm (apparently) separate om the terrestrial one, which is neither heaven nor hell and is populated by perhumans who are not definitively good or evil, it has no place in ristian teaching. Its prominence in wonder-tales and romances, in which agic and the supernatural are major themes, could indicate how tight a ld it kept on the medieval imagination; though it could also represent how e the medieval imagination itself was, when writing fiction, of the hold of y tradition including mainstream Christian belief. It could represent one of e most important survivals from the old religions to the world of the new, ver theologically assimilated but apparently accepted without strain as ng as the stories that involved it conformed to Christian values or were set vaguely pre-Christian times; but that is unproven.[82]

Seasonal Customs

The manner in which Christianity appropriated and adapted pagan stivals has been discussed in the previous chapter. Alongside this process ent another, whereby particular religious customs and rites which had companied the old festivals continued, in the same or in mutated forms, as pular customs at the same seasons.[83] During the late nineteenth century itish scholars took up the idea, developed by German colleagues, that

ıditional forms of festivity recorded among the modern populace – pecially in the countryside – often functioned as living fossils, preserving e memory of ancient ritual. This theory further proposed that the study of em could provide insights into ancient culture, and allow the construction of religious beliefs and practices in periods from which no ritten evidence survived. It depended on two assumptions which were ıaracteristic of the mindset of much of the educated elite of the age. The st was that common people, and especially rural people, were essentially capable of independent thought and innovation, and so mechanically peated actions and beliefs handed down to them from much earlier riods; even if they had lost all understanding of the true meaning of them. ıe second was discussed earlier: the characterization of the ordinary folk of e Middle Ages, and beyond, as having a religious culture to which ıristianity had given a mere veneer, and which depended in large part on a ntinuation of pagan rites and habits of mind.

In the early twentieth century, the ‘survivals’ theory of folklore fell out favour among professional scholars, partly because it had proved to rest ı too many dubious assumptions and partly because it tumbled into a gap tween the emerging disciplines of history and anthropology. This only leased it, however, to flourish as an article of faith among enthusiastic ıateurs. It probably reached its apogee in the 1930s, when, for example, a esident of Britain’s Folklore Society, S. H. Hooke, could suggest to its embers that pancake-tossing had been a rite to make crops grow, that ırove Tuesday football matches had begun as ritual struggles representing e contest of dark and light, and that Mother’s Day was a relic of the orship of the ancient Earth Mother. With slightly less exuberance, and wer additions to the canon of belief, it continued to dominate popular itudes to seasonal customs well into the second half of the century. This uation was made possible by a dearth of interest in the subject among storians, but from the 1980s that situation began to change, and produced a ajor re-evaluation of the subject, based on solid primary research.

This resulted in a dramatic re-evaluation of attitudes to some of the most mous British calendar customs. The Mummers’ Play and Sword Dance, r example, which Edwardian scholars had declared to have been survivals prehistoric ritual dramas based on themes of death and resurrection,

oved to have developed in the eighteenth century, and peaked in popularity ıring the early nineteenth. The morris dance, assumed by the same school scholarship to have been an ancient fertility rite, was documented as pearing in the royal and noble courts of late medieval Europe and filtering ıt from the English one to become a popular craze in the sixteenth century, eaking into regional traditions after that. The seasonal animal disguises und in different parts of Britain at specific times of year, assumed around 00 to have derived from tribal totems, turned out on documentation to ve been local adaptations, made between 1750 and 1850, of the traditional bby-horse dance, which had itself apparently begun as a professional tertainment in the Middle Ages. All these revelations were accompanied a realization that traditional popular culture was much more dynamic, rous, imaginative, creative, adaptable and prone to periods of change and newal, than had formerly been assumed by scholars; the Victorian and lwardian attitude to it was fundamentally mistaken as well as deeply ndescending. There were particular periods which were especially notable r large-scale makeovers of seasonal celebration in Britain, of which the e Middle Ages formed one and the Georgian and Victorian eras another. judge from the regular changes of form for ritual monuments in ehistory, it is very likely that equivalent adjustments of seasonal ritual also curred then.

Having said this, it must be emphasized that some calendar customs do ss the test of proper research as having a direct transmission from ancient nes, and that the list of pagan survivals has been winnowed and not erased. ristmas presents derive directly from the ancient making of gifts at idwinter, to open the New Year, and the decking of homes and holy places th greenery at festivals, notably with holly and ivy at midwinter and birch d flowers at midsummer, is also found as history begins. The making of cred fires at the opening of summer and at its solstice, to bless and protect ople and their livestock from the dangers of the season, is recorded in late tique or early medieval texts. The medieval Christian Rogation ocessions, to bless fields in the time of growing crops, were successors to gan rites of benediction. It is also very likely that other customs are cient, although only recorded later. The wide distribution of may-poles ross areas of Europe which had an agrarian economy, and so were

pendent on the flourishing of greenery, ties in with a general celebration foliage and flowers at this time, as they were fastened on the poles. ence, although they are not mentioned before the high Middle Ages, they e probably older, and are certainly part of the broader ancient tradition of stive greenery and blooms. Likewise, the proven ancient provenance of fts at the winter solstice is part of a larger pattern of blessing rites which ened the New Year for many European peoples as the daylight began to ngthen again. This means that the southern English custom of wassailing, singing to livestock, grain fields or orchards soon after midwinter to courage them to be productive in the coming year, may well be very old en if it is not recorded until the sixteenth century.

This last consideration touches on another, which has already been esent in the discussion of Welsh literature: that the continuities become sier to identify when a larger view is taken. Thus, the precise dances and ays performed around midwinter in Victoria's reign may not have been cient, but dances and plays of some kind had been performed at that ason since history began, and undoubtedly long before. They are part of e enduring character of that festival as a time of feasting, entertainment, llowship, charity, rest from work and reversals or suspensions of normal stems of authority. The Christmas tree may be a Victorian importation of early modern German custom, but it is merely the latest expression of a e older tradition of decking homes with greenery at midwinter. Likewise, e opening of summer and its solstice have been marked by open-air revelry over Europe since records begin, and the conclusion of harvests, of the fferent products of farming, by equivalent celebrations in farmhouses or e halls of landowners. Whatever the precise content of the rites, the ening of winter has always been a time for meetings and feasts as embers of a community return from their summer occupations and draw gether for the winter; often with divination rites to predict who was likely survive that dreaded season and other activities to mock or honour the wers of darkness, cold and death. Occasionally, also, a particular custom ill echo one that is clearly ancient, even if it is not so itself. The Victorian mmer and autumn tradition of well-dressing in the north Midlands is a odern equivalent of the very old one of paying respects to sacred springs. ne Horn Dance at Abbots Bromley in Staffordshire's Forest of Needwood

ay be a seventeenth-century adaptation of a routine hobby-horse dance, ing imported (and much older) reindeer antlers. None the less, the records early medieval Continental churchmen are full of denunciations of the stom of donning the hides and horns or antlers of animals at midwinter; so e Abbots Bromley dance is an echo of something ancient even though it is obably not a survival of it.

The relationship between calendar customs and changing religions is erefore a complex one, which needs to be considered on a case-by-case sis, with collation of both the available records and the broader contexts. ne former tendency to assume that virtually all traditional British seasonal es were survivors of paganism was clearly misplaced, but blanket smissal of pagan ingredients in them would be even more erroneous. oad themes of seasonal festivity often have more staying power than dividual customs, though even some of those can be proved to have rvived for millennia; and the process of conscious and unconscious plication and recreation of the ancient adds a further dimension of mplexity to the subject.

Witches and Fairies

The greatest apparent proof cited by those who believed in the continued istence of an organized and self-conscious British pagan religion roughout the Middle Ages lay in the early modern records of trials for itchcraft. In the nineteenth century first German and then French authors gued that the people tried for that offence had been practitioners of a rviving ancient religion, and all that divided those authors was that actionaries portrayed that religion as disgusting, and applauded its rsecutors, and radicals declared it to have been admirable, and excoriated ose who prosecuted it as enemies of liberty, feminism and a love of the tural world. The British came comparatively late to this idea, but took it with gusto, and the best-known and most persistent exponent of it in the entieth century was Margaret Murray. In a series of books between 1921 d 1954 she drew selectively upon the records of trials and the writings of monologists to construct a portrait of a witch religion, descended from mote antiquity, which covered Western Europe and was comprehensively ushed by persecution between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. To

so, she made heavy use of British, and especially Scottish, material. By e middle of the century, her view had become something of a scholarly thodoxy, repeated in textbooks on medieval and early modern history ritten by distinguished historians who were not themselves experts in itchcraft; of whom, indeed, Europe in general had few at this period. It elf, it seemed to prove the existence of a robust and flourishing medieval ganism, organized into a popular counter-religion which presented a edible, deliberate and successful alternative to Christianity. From the 70s, however, sustained and careful research into early modern beliefs in itchcraft and trials for it commenced, which gradually covered every part Europe. It left no possibility that such a religion had existed.[84]

Nevertheless, in a microcosm of changing attitudes to the 'pagan Middle ges' as a whole, the disappearance of this scholarly error has opened the ay for a much more profitable investigation of the manner in which ancient liefs contributed to the construction of the early modern stereotype of the itch and provided contexts for the trials. There has been no division in this terprise between historians who have most explicitly condemned the ncept of witchcraft as an organized pagan religion and those who have gaged in this alternative, and subsequent, enterprise: they have indeed nerally been the same people. Carlo Ginzburg, who has been associated ore than anybody else with the project of recovering pre-Christian ditions from early modern trials for witchcraft, declared that a polemic hich termed Margaret Murray's work 'amateurish, absurd, bereft of any ientific merit' was 'justified'. He emphasized that the trial records 'simply cument myths and not rituals'.[85] Norman Cohn, who was one of the itish historians most commonly associated with the attack on the edibility of the Murray thesis, was also the one who stressed most thusiastically the roots of medieval and early modern witchcraft beliefs in cient traditions.[86] The Continental scholar who devoted most care to owing how the kinds of trial records used by Murray to document an tual religion were the product of pure fantasy, Gustav Henningsen, was so among the most notable in uncovering old folk beliefs behind images of itchcraft.[87] The present author, who has charted the history of the theory at witchcraft had been a pagan religion, declared in his very first treatment the issue that the 'vivid medieval realm of the imagination' which

oduced images of witchcraft drew on ancient, and indeed some worldwide, odes of thought, and ‘urgently requires further investigation’.[88]

No concerted effort has, however, been made to that end, and instead mething of a cleavage has tended to open between anglophone and ontinental schools of witchcraft scholarship. British and American storians have excelled in applying insights from criminology, sociology, ychology, literary studies and cultural studies, and made notable ntributions to an understanding of the ideology of early modern witchcraft osecutions, and of their relation to gender and social class, and to the eakness or strength of state systems.[89] They have been much less inclined pay attention to parallels from world anthropology or to the question of cient origins. By contrast, some Continental European colleagues have en very willing to do both, and again achieved excellent results.[90] They ve tended, however, to look to broad models of spiritual tradition and haviour, and especially to that of an archaic shamanism which is metimes employed as an umbrella concept. It is certainly important to scuss what traditional human societies have in common, and shamanism ovides a convenient term for direct contacts with spirits by human ecialists in other than normal consciousness. The danger is that an nbrella can all too easily, in this context, turn into a dustbin. Every human ciety until the eighteenth century believed that it was surrounded and rmeated by a spirit world with which it had to deal: it is productive to plore the different ways in which they responded to that universal belief. here is a considerable difference between people who went into trance in e course of a dramatic public performance in order to carry out acts of aling and divination; people who dreamed of going forth from their bodies hile asleep to do battle with evil spirits or the spirits of evil humans; people ho believed that they were swept up while asleep by spectral cavalcades r that they were seeing such cavalcades pass by); and people who believed at good spirits visited them by night and made them gifts. All these were stinctive European traditions, rooted in pre-Christian cultures and entified with particular regions, and to sweep them together into the tegory of ‘shamanism’ conceals as much as it reveals. It also deprives us a chance to explain differences in the historic record, whereby some areas Europe had witch trials and others had not, some tried a majority of

ɔmen and some of men, and the actions credited to witches took different rms in different places.

The general picture is now clear. In ancient times most societies in ırope and the Near East feared witchcraft, defined as the assumed ability some human beings to do deliberate injury to others by magical means.[91] ıey had this in common with most human societies in the world, though by ɔ means all. Ancient witch-hunts could be on a very large scale: if we can ıst information provided by the Roman historian Livy, 3,000 people were ecuted in one wave of trials in Italy (most in Rome itself) during the cond century BC and 2,000 more in another, body counts which match or rpass any achieved in single witch-hunts in Christian Europe.[92] The fluence of ancient ideas and procedures on early modern European ɔnstructions of witchcraft was profound. The materials attributed by ıakespeare to his witches' potion echo those used by witches in the works the Roman poet Horace, while when Shakespeare's contemporary Ben nson wrote an antimasque about witches as a preface to his *Masque of ueenes*, he filled his published text of it with references to Greek and ɔman sources.[93] The popular tradition that witches would float if thrown to water, and that this test could be used to detect them, was first given ıown legal expression in the law code of the Babylonian king Hammurabi the early second millennium BC.[94] A belief in the threat posed by itchcraft, and a stock of images of it and responses to it, was one of the ain bequests of the pagan ancient world to the medieval and early modern ıristian one.

There was actually no intrinsic necessity for any form of Christianity to come closely associated with the prosecution of witchcraft. It makes little pearance in the New Testament, where demonic possession, relieved by orcism, is prominent instead. Christ said nothing about witches, and nor d any of his immediate apostles, and while St Paul did condemn magic, ing a term that could be translated as witchcraft, he did so as a sin on a vel with anger and lechery, rather than as a lethal crime (Galatians 5:20). A slike of various forms of magic is patent in the Old Testament, along with ıe famous injunction to put witches to death (Exodus 22:18); but this was e Mosaic Code, which Christ's coming could be said to have abrogated. It

as, rather, their own embedment in general late Roman culture which used Romanized forms of Christianity to accept legal sanctions against any forms of magic, justified theologically by a new doctrine that any act hich disposed of apparently supernatural power outside the mediation of a urch had of necessity to involve the aid of a demon. However, the passage om the old to the new forms of religion did not produce any apparent crease in trials for witchcraft, and in northern Europe it even suppressed ecutions for certain types of imagined magical activity, such as of women ho were believed to fly around by night and prey on the life force of man beings.[95] For most of the Middle Ages, the use of magic was nished as a criminal act when it was thought to have resulted in actual jury or been used to influence political events, but the number of ecutions resulting was relatively small, and scattered through space and ne.[96]

In the early fifteenth century, however, some theologians and magistrates gan to reconstruct witchcraft as an organized religion of devotion to the ristian Devil, who granted witches the ability to work magic through the tivities of demons. Those who made this leap of the imagination were nscious of the fact that they were breaking with tradition, and aracterized the satanic cult they were describing as a new and terrifying enace to Christianity. In doing so, they took a step unique among world liefs in witchcraft, of associating it with a particular kind of religion, liberately pitted against the true and orthodox one by the cosmic power of il. Such a development was made possible only by the stark dualism of ristian theology, but even so the only Christian Churches in which it was cepted were the Roman Catholic one of late medieval western and central rope and the Protestant successors into which it splintered at the formation. It was also slow to take hold, the resulting trials of suspects ing mainly confined to a corridor between the Netherlands and northern ly for a hundred and fifty years. Only with the struggle between Protestant d Catholic did the pitch of religious anger, terror and suspicion in Europe read to the point at which persecution of alleged witches became despread and intense. None the less, criticism of witch trials always rsisted, and the great majority of executions occurred in one long lifetime, tween 1560 and 1630, after which the readiness to persecute waned,

ough it had late flare-ups on the European periphery from New England to candinavia and Poland. In many ways it was a brief experiment in ways of aling with misfortune, which was abandoned largely because it did not oduce good results: communities which executed people for witchcraft did t appear to fare any better or to be especially favoured by their deity. ecisive evidence of the satanic conspiracy was always elusive, and lerance of presumed witches grew with that of other kinds of Christian, d of Jews, as part of a general rejection of murderous religious rsecution.[97]

Historians are now agreed that there is no reason to believe in any kind organized witch religion, pagan or satanic, behind the European witch als. It is quite likely that some people did curse their neighbours, and quite ssible – though the nature of the evidence makes proof elusive – that a w of these imagined that they had made a pact with the Devil in order to so. That is, however, a very different phenomenon, and there is no solid idence that any people in early modern Europe actually gathered to orship Satan or any other non-Christian being, in preference to the ristian God, let alone with formalized and prescribed rites. What is very ear instead is that popular traditions concerning the nature of the pernatural, which had survived from pre-Christian times, played a part th in forming the stereotype of the demonic witch and in determining the ture and incidence of trials. The most celebrated, and extreme, example of is effect was discovered by Carlo Ginzburg in the Friuli district of north-stern Italy, in the form of belief in individuals collectively known as the *nandanti*. These were people distinguished by being born with a caul, hich was thought to give them the power to send forth their spirits by night do battle with local witches who threatened the fertility of the fields. This dition represented one corner of a belief in dream warriors, whose spirits ent forth by night to defend their communities in similar fashion, found all er the Balkans and northwards as far as Hungary. In Friuli, however, those ho thought themselves to be *benandanti* fell in the years around 1600 into e hands of Catholic inquisitors seeking witches who, convinced that these nign Christian spirit-voyagers were witches themselves, suppressed em.[98]

As said, the *benandanti* were a most unusual case, of something like a e-Christian cult (or one that can reasonably be presumed to have been one) rviving into early modern times, although thoroughly assimilated to ıristianity until the inquisitors decided otherwise. Historians of Britain ve been especially hard put to find anything remotely comparable, not ast because people accused of witchcraft in England and Wales were most never presumed to have engaged in communal acts of devil worship. nly in Scotland were such acts often recorded in confessions, and it was om there that Margaret Murray drew most of her British evidence for a gan religion, from accounts which have subsequently been rejected as ntasy or as reports of innocent popular revels that were interpreted as tanic by prosecutors.[99] Emma Wilby and Julian Goodare have both cently applied Carlo Ginzburg's model of shamanic cults surviving in ıristianized form to the Scottish material. Theirs is a fascinating line of quiry, which thoroughly deserves to be followed, but thus far the former's e of comparisons with the practices of figures called shamans by scholars other continents has yielded only speculative possibilities.[100] The latter ay have detected a Scottish tradition of communication with spirits similar that of the *benandanti*, but thus far its existence is not firmly proven.[101] In context concerned with pagan survivals, it is worth pointing out that in ither case is there any indication that the people concerned regarded emselves as pagans, or could now be regarded as such.

Once again, however, when a broader view is taken, the element of gan tradition assumes major importance. This may be illustrated by the cidence and nature of prosecution. In this respect, the north-eastern lantic islands may be divided into three sharply delineated zones.[102] One represented by England, Lowland Scotland, Scandinavian Scotland aithness and the Northern Isles, the areas of major Viking settlement), ontier areas of the Highlands where mainstream, Lowland, Scottish ltural influence was strong, the English settlements in Ireland, and the annel Islands (culturally part of Normandy, and so of France). This had in mmon with most of northern Europe a strong popular fear of witchcraft, sulting in a large number of trials, the great majority of which were of omen, and – where systems of justice responded most directly to local inion – a high rate of execution. The second zone consists of Iceland,

hich also produced a high level of witch-hunting, relative to the size of the pulation, but where almost all the victims – over 90 per cent – were men. had this male preponderance in common with some other northern cieties, such as those of the Baltic peoples, the Sámi or Lapps, (initially) e Finns, and the Russians. The third comprises the areas of the British Isles here a Celtic language, and associated culture, predominated: most of the cottish Highlands and Hebrides, the Isle of Man, Wales, and those areas of eland where the native population remained in the majority. Here there ere few trials and fewer executions, and anxiety concerning witchcraft ems to have been less than elsewhere. These three differing areas were not parated by religious allegiances, and their social and political structures, d gender relationships, were too similar to explain the apparent screpancy between them.

One way of providing an explanation consists of examining contrasting ltural traditions, rooted in the ancient world, of destructive magic. Iceland y on the edge of a cultural province in which male magicians were most ared and respected and operated a dramatic public rite technique in which ey would go into a trance and work with a spirit world for the good of ients and their own communities and the detriment of foes. This is amanism of the classical sort, as found around the Arctic zone of the globe d across Siberia and neighbouring regions, and its presence in Iceland – in ybrid and diluted form – is attested by the island's famous medieval gas. The Celtic cultures of medieval and early modern Europe seem to ve possessed three characteristics, displayed in medieval literature, early odern court records and later folklore collections, which mitigated the pulse to prosecute witchcraft. The first was a belief in the legitimacy of rsing, if done openly and in response to genuine wrong; the second an ceptance that some people could inflict magical harm involuntarily and consciously, by possession of an 'evil eye'; and the third a greater than ual fear, for Europeans, of land spirits, called fairies, elves or by various eltic names. These spirits were commonly regarded as inflicting the kinds misfortune on humans which elsewhere were more frequently blamed on itches. The rest of the British Isles conformed to a mainstream European dition, which greatly feared the harm that evil humans might inflict on

hers by using magic, and had a special wariness of and respect for the tural magical powers thought to be inherent in women.

The mention of fairies and elves introduces another component into the tegory of pagan survivals, allied to the concept of parallel worlds already scussed in the form of the Welsh Annwn. Throughout the Middle Ages, d long after, popular tradition all over Britain teemed with rural spirits hich had no obvious place in Christianity. Some were associated with rticular bodies of water, as ancient goddesses such as Sulis, Coventina and erbeia had been. The later folkloric water beings, however, like Peg Powler d Jenny Greenteeth in northern England and the Scottish kelpie or *each sge* (water horse), tended to be much more menacing than their divine edecessors: beings to be avoided or destroyed rather than propitiated or friended. Only in Wales was there a widespread lingering belief in the esence of lake-people who took human form, might mate with humans and uld provide benefits to them. Another category of beings were household irits, which might help or hinder and went by names such as hobgoblin in ngland, brownie in Lowland Scotland, *bwca* in Wales and *bodachan bhaill* in the Scottish Highlands. There were also the fairies or elves oper, known in Wales as the *Tylwyth Teg*, in the Northern Isles as trows, d in Gaelic regions by various names with the prefix *sí*. These tended to ve underground and in a communal society with its own royal court and ler, usually a nameless queen. They raided and molested humans, but also metimes gave benefits, though these tended to be illusory or transitory, d for people to deal with such beings was regarded as disreputable as well dangerous.

The water spirits and household spirits had clear parallels all over pagan urope, including the Mediterranean, but the fairy society, existing in a rallel world to the human, was strictly a northern tradition, its members ing neither personifications of nature nor deities. None of these beings, wever, had any agreed place in Christian tradition. When medieval and rly modern people tried to find one for them, two suggestions were nerally made. One was that they were fallen angels, whose sins had been ss than those consigned to hell and so who haunted the terrestrial world or boundaries; the other that they were the ghosts of human beings who had ssessed uncanny traits in life or met with mysterious kinds of death. After

e Reformation, evangelical Protestant orthodoxy maintained that they were vils of a wholly straightforward kind, and so individuals who claimed to ve dealings with them, or were thought to do so, could end up on a charge witchcraft, according to the new satanic model. On the whole, however, pular opinion maintained stubbornly that they were neither angels nor mons, of any sort, but an altogether different order of supernatural being hich was not recorded in Christian theology; and this was the tradition hich has endured into modern times. They were a survival from pagan lief which the new religion had found more or less indigestible, but which ve it little trouble in practice because few if any people attempted to orship fairies so they did not tangle with issues of allegiance or lvation.[103]

As so often when dealing with the subject of survivals, specific case udies, of especially notable and famed examples, can prove more oblematic than the broad picture. On the island of Lewis, in the Outer ebrides, men in the late seventeenth century knelt down at the edge of the aves at Hallowe'en and recited the Lord's Prayer. One then waded waist-ep into the sea, poured out a bowl of ale, and asked a being called Shoney r a good growth of seaweed (for manure) in the coming year. They then ent back to a particular chapel, dedicated to St Malvey, and sat there in ence for a while before making merry in the fields.[104] The custom was und elsewhere in the Western Isles, for example on Iona where it was corded until the late eighteenth century, while it lingered on Lewis until e nineteenth.[105] At first sight it seems a perfect survival of a pagan rite to a arine deity, preserved in a Christianized context; a supposition which is engthened by the facts that Protestant ministers on Lewis campaigned to ppress it in the 1670s and that the nineteenth-century version of it actually ldresses the being concerned as 'God of the Sea'. The difficulties start with e name, because 'Shoney' is simply a Gaelic version of the English and owland Scots 'Johnnie', and it seems odd to find a native deity addressed such. This raises the possibility that the ceremony was originally directed one of the saints called John, whose cult, suppressed at the Reformation, ould have irritated Scottish Protestant clergy as much as a pagan one. The rect mode of address as a 'god', recorded later, is in a text provided by the lklore collector Alexander Carmichael, who has been suspected of

lishing up the material that he gathered.[106] None of these doubts adicates the ancient quality of the act, of pouring a libation into the sea ith a spoken prayer requesting a service, but it may possibly be a relic of a edieval Christian rite, transplanted to the shore when the traditional saints' lts were abolished.

A different case study, that of the English figure of Herne the Hunter, is many ways more straightforward, though also ultimately inconclusive: hat is known of it has been teased out by Jeremy Harte.[107] Herne first pears in Shakespeare's play *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act IV), as a yal gamekeeper who, presumably because of a curse or his own evil ture, became doomed after death to haunt the forest in winter. His ghost ore large horns or antlers, shook a chain to terrify humans, and had the wer to afflict cattle with disease and death. It is not known, and probably ver will be, whether Shakespeare invented the whole story himself, as a eful plot device – for so it proves – or adopted an existing Windsor legend. ocal folklore elaborated on it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as became a part of the tourist trade of the district, to account (for example) r the keeper's untimely death. The decisive change in Herne's fortunes me in 1843, when the most popular historical novelist in early Victorian ngland, Harrison Ainsworth, included it in a story entitled *Windsor Castle*. insworth drew on the account of the German tradition of the Wild Hunt, a cturnal procession of ghostly riders, to turn Herne into the English leader such a cavalcade, put into that position as a result of a pact with Satan. his new personification duly entered local lore as well as literary tradition, d Herne's hunt was heard and seen around Windsor. It was Margaret urray who finally transformed him into a pagan god, the English uivalent to the Gaulish Cernunnos, drawing upon Ainsworth's portrait of m as her source material. As such, he has played a prominent part in the odern imagination, whether as a divine and benevolent leader of the Wild unt in the children's fiction of Susan Cooper from the 1970s or as the esiding deity of the forest in a popular television series of the 1980s.[108] ke Ceridwen, therefore, he is essentially a literary figure whom modernity s back-projected into the pagan past. Equally, it is possible both to argue at this back-projection cannot positively be disproved and that literary eations can have a spiritual life of their own, or even 'channel' the hitherto

ısuspected presence of actual divine powers.[109] As in her case, however, it possible to remark instead upon the weight with which the hand of the neteenth century has lain upon the imagination of the twentieth, and yond. Herne's status as pagan god, at any rate, is very doubtful.

Such specific considerations should not be permitted to detract from the gnificance of the broader picture, that both a fear of witchcraft and a belief a parallel world of fairies and related spirits were clear legacies of a world der than Christianity. People who hung up charms or carried out rites ainst the spells of witches or fairies, or left out gifts of food and drink to opitiate the latter, were genuinely acting out belief systems which had rvived from prehistory. It is indeed in these wider systems of thought that e most potent relics of paganism can be found. It may be opportune here to turn for a last time to the Old English poem *Beowulf*. In the preceding apter it was suggested that this was a work by a Christian writer, ıagining a lost world of paganism, rather than either a pagan work which d been given a Christian gloss or a Christian one which preserved a vivid emory of pagan rites. Even so, in its social and cultural attitudes, it very ccessfully transmitted a set of ancient northern values which were at odds ith the teachings of Christianity. These included an absolute obligation, nounting to a test of honour, to exact vengeance or demand compensation r wrongs done to oneself or to kin or friends; a love of material objects, as autiful creations which almost possessed personalities of their own and hich gave moral value to their possessors and proved their inherent orthiness; and a deep suspicion of the natural world as a wild and ngerous place, rather than of the human one as a place of corruption and oral danger. In these senses, the new religion did indeed form a veneer er old habits of mind, even while it successfully displaced the former ities as a focus for religious loyalties.

Protective Magic

For much of the twentieth century, scholars who wanted to believe that edieval British Christianity was spread thinly over a still substantially gan popular culture found further supporting evidence in charms. These ere written prayers and spells, intended to be spoken or worn on the rson, which were thought to have power to counteract specific ailments

d misfortunes.[110] In recent years they have continued to attract the tention of researchers, but there has been something of a reaction against emphasis on the pagan elements in them. Karen Jolly has pointed instead the essentially Christian nature of the whole body of surviving texts, into hich some pagan ingredients had been successfully assimilated. She ncluded that 'these so-called magic or pagan elements represent areligious lklore, transferable from one religious tradition to another', and that they hould not suggest a lesser understanding of Christian truth or a degradation Christianity by the influence of paganism'.[111] A subsequent collection of says on charms stressed that they formed part of popular Christian culture, d that in many cases Latin texts produced by monks preceded rresponding versions in vernacular languages. It concluded that to focus the tiny number of early charms that show pagan features is to ignore and stort mainstream Western European tradition, and noted that those few rly charms were themselves preserved by monks.[112] In view of these anging attitudes, the obvious next step is to consider that 'tiny number' of itish texts with pagan features, and see what can be said about them here.

One of the most famous is the 'Lay of the Nine Twigs of Woden', from e late Old English commonplace book known as the *Lacnunga*.[113] ncerned with the healing and protective power of herbs, it describes how Woden' took 'nine glory-twigs' to destroy a poisonous snake. Later it plicitly evokes the power of Christ, and in between speaks of two herbs as ing created by 'the wise Lord holy in heaven when He hung'. That 'Lord' probably Jesus, but there is an outside chance that it is Woden, *if* he sembled the Norse Odin in the latter's mythology of hanging nine days m a tree to gain wisdom. On the other hand, there is no explicit indication at Woden himself is treated here as a god, as opposed to being a human agician, and long before the time of the *Lacnunga* he had been brought to Christian English tradition as a mortal man, a descendant of Noah who pears in royal genealogies. The truth is that we do not really understand s role in the charm, which itself appears to be garbled in its recorded form. he same is true of Woden's appearance in another, in which he is actually rtrayed as speaking, to cure wrenched body parts: he may be featuring as a d, magician or physician. The same text also mentions 'Baldur': this uld be the Norse god of that name, or may be an Anglo-Saxon word for a

ader.[114] Similar problems attend a runic charm surviving in a manuscript mpiled at Canterbury Cathedral in the 1070s, which calls on Thor to stop ood poisoning. It is accompanied by five others, which invoke the ristian God and saints against different physical ills. The literary scholar ho called attention to it, John Frankis, suggested that the monk who copied did not understand its pagan nature, a possibility strengthened by the fact at he certainly could not handle all of its language, rendering some into umbo-jumbo.[115] What we do not understand is whether those from whom obtained it understood it any better: as the god is Thor and not the nglish Thunor, it would have been gained from Scandinavians, settled in or siting England.

Another example, as well known as the 'Lay of the Nine Twigs', is the ield Blessing Ceremony' or 'Aecerbot', known from a single manuscript the late tenth or early eleventh century.[116] It is soaked in Christian nguage and imagery, quoting passages of liturgy and mentioning the inity (both together and in its component parts), the Virgin Mary and the ur Evangelists. It also, however, calls on 'Erce, Erce, Erce, earth's mother' the indwelling spirit of the soil that is to be fertilized. The word 'Erce' is t recorded in any other source, and has no discernible meaning in Anglo-xon, so that it may be a genuine pagan deity-name or a corruption of the tin *ecce*, meaning 'behold'. The text embodies a clear theology, whereby e Christian God, who is the object of most of its devotion, grants fertility the soil, as part of his general remit as ruler of the universe and its creator. ough personified as a 'mother', it is shown as a passive entity, entirely in s power. What is less clear is whether this maternal being is a specific rmer goddess or an abstraction imagined for the purposes of the rite. There at least no doubt of the pagan provenance of another field-blessing charm corded in medieval English literature, the Latin poem 'Praecatio terrae atris'. It is found in several Continental manuscripts dating from the sixth ntury onwards, and one English one from the eleventh or twelfth century. its earliest manuscript appearance it is glossed as 'the beginning of the ayer to earth employed by the pagans of old when they wished to collect rbs', and indeed it features in works devoted to herbal medicine, with a ristian prayer appended to it. Whether it was originally a charm may be ubted, for it is a very polished literary work in praise of 'Earth, Divine

ɔddess, Mother Nature', produced by a talented and sophisticated writer wards the end of the Roman Empire.[117] As such, it is excellent evidence r the incorporation of pagan material into later Christian works, and for the tegration of England into mainstream medieval intellectual culture, but not r any surviving paganism in Britain.

The sense that the appearance of figures such as Woden and Thor in arms is a vestigial remnant of their old character as deities, as opposed to sign of a continuing veneration of them, is enhanced by the lack of an during tradition that embodies them: after the eleventh century, they no nger feature in charms and nor does 'Erce' or 'Mother Nature'. Instead, hen such texts have a religious character (which they often do), it is wholly ristian, though often of a rather conservative kind: many dating from the riod after 1700 call on saints and the Virgin Mary in a medieval manner ficially condemned at the Reformation.[118] Once again, however, a broader ew of the question reveals deeper continuities, which have been less parent because of the very success with which they were integrated with ristianity. The very notion that spoken words could tap into hidden wers within the world, to obtain physical results, was pre-Christian, even it could easily be accepted that the Christian God had placed those powers ere. Medieval herb-lore retained both ancient learned concepts of tithetical properties in nature, found in pagan authors, and ancient popular ditions of the magical associations of plants, and their connection to good d evil spirits and the influence of the moon.[119] Charms were commonly ed by specialists who had inherited an inherent, and uncanny, power to ield them, and also formed part of the much broader repertoire of remedies ployed – usually for a fee – by those people known in English as 'cunning lk' or 'wise folk' and by many other names up and down Britain. These ed magic as the solution for a host of problems and ailments – of which e removal of bewitchment was perhaps the most important – brought to em by the inhabitants of their locality. They have been recorded in Britain ɔm the first appearance of legal records until the twentieth century, have uivalents in every inhabited Continent of the world, and posed theological d practical difficulties for conscientious or intolerant clergy from Anglo-xon times onwards. Not a single one between the conversion period and e twentieth century has been shown to have been a pagan, their recorded

liefs spanning the spectrum of those found in the surrounding Christian ciety; but their very existence, as an independent source of apparently pernatural power to the clergy, represented an intermittent, but persisting, urce of concern for churches.[120]

Narrowing the focus of analysis to Anglo-Saxon charms once more, it n readily be seen that they commonly embody four concepts which rtainly derive from pre-Christian Germanic tradition.[121] These were the liefs in an invisible form of magical attack called ‘flying venom’ (actually t a bad metaphor for airborne infection); in elves as the cause of many rts of ailment; in the magical properties of the number nine; and in the yrm or worm as a malevolent and dangerous form of beast, equating to a rm of super-serpent. Less often, they mention other kinds of being from gan Germanic mythology, such as ‘ladies who could free or fetter arriors’.[122] Karen Jolly is certainly right to remind us that ‘although it may of interest to the modern scholar to trace the pagan, Anglo-Saxon, and ristian elements of these remedies, we need to recognize that the remedies isted in their own time as integrated wholes, without any self-nsciousness of a conflict of traditions or beliefs.‘[123] It may be noted here, her work and that of her predecessors show, that Greek, Roman and abic elements also form part of that integrated whole of early English agical medicine. All that may be worth adding, in the present context, is w significant a contribution the pagan elements – classical Mediterranean d Germanic together – made to that combination, however Christianized it as.

Slightly different problems and reflections attend another form of otective magic: objects and marks placed within buildings and other uctures to house the living and dead. This is a field hitherto almost wholly nored by mainstream historians of the medieval and early modern periods, cause the evidence concerned is almost entirely material. This leads to a uble neglect, because if magic in general has only relatively recently gun to receive the attention of such historians, the same is even more true material culture in general.[124] Anthropologists and folklorists were, by ntrast, very interested in material objects during the nineteenth and early entieth centuries, but subsequently they too turned away from them.[125] In

cent years important pioneering work, carried out by scholars either ıtside or on the fringe of the academic system, has revealed the impressive ale of the relevant data. It was an archaeologist attached to the Museum of ɔndon, Ralph Merrifield, who first drew attention systematically to it in the)80s, and made a convincing argument that it represented a direct ıntinuity of the ancient practice of making ritual deposits to consecrate, ɔnour and protect places and bodies. Coins were still put with corpses in neteenth-century Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire. Animal bones, pecially skulls and lower jaws, have occasionally been found under edieval doorways and building foundations, and so have pots.[126] Brian ɔggard has recently made a survey of objects ritually deposited in ıncealed places around buildings, from 650 museums and archaeological llections, which must be a mere fraction of those discovered in the past ıuple of hundred years, as most would have been discarded with pugnance or indifference. Unlike most archaeology, this is a kind which ɨpends on chance finds.[127] The objects were usually put into walls, roofs, ɔors, hearths and entrances and exits: the spiritually significant and ılnerable ‘liminal’ points. Most spectacular are ‘witch bottles’, glass or ɔttery containers stocked with human urine and metal pins or nails: 200 are corded from England. More common are shoes, most of them well worn so at they had taken on the shape of the wearer’s foot: Northampton Museum ɔne has 1,500 of these. Over a hundred dried cats are recorded, which is ɡnificant, as anecdotal evidence among builders suggests that they are ually thrown away when found, and probably over a thousand have been scarded in this manner. Charms are also found, of the kind obtained from ınning folk, and so are horses’ skulls: more rarely, dolls, rats, toads, pipes, ıives, coins and garments. Other researchers have recently made particular ıdies of certain classes of these objects.

Of the whole stock of them, the witch bottles are least mysterious ɨcause they have a text to explain them, written in 1651 by Joseph .agrave, who stated that they represented the bladder of a witch, and were ed as counter-magic by people who believed themselves to be bewitched. the bottle were heated, the witch who had cast the curse was believed to ffer pain, and if this did not apparently work, concealment of the container ɔuld lead to her or his slow decay instead. Other than having a linkage to

e ancient fear of witchcraft, they are the least relevant to pagan survivals, cause their distribution suggests that they spread from the south-east of ngland, from the sixteenth century onwards.[128] Shoes are, by contrast, ested in firmly dated contexts from the year 1308 onwards, though their position apparently increased in popularity in the eighteenth and neteenth centuries, and indeed builders often seem routinely to have gaged in it.[129] Here again we have a textual reference, from a Victorian storian who commented on the ‘many who nail up an old shoe in our ssels and houses, though not liking to own our belief, yet consider it ould be a pity to receive harm from neglecting so easy a precaution’.[130] his proves its purpose as a general protective act, as the shoe is the kind of rment which best retains the shape, and so the essence and power, of the earer. Here there certainly is a connection with ancient ritual practice, cause shoes were found as foundation deposits in the Roman Empire, cluding Britain, mostly in pits and wells.[131]

103 A carved wooden shoe, found inside the roof of a seventeenth-century cottage at Wrington, th Somerset, photographed by the owner, Tom Henry, in 2011. It is a common experience to find l shoes of the functional, leather, variety concealed in buildings between the later Middle Ages and eteenth century, apparently as protective charms. A wooden one is, however, unusual, and the ne engraved upon it, 'Anvers', which seems to refer to the city of Antwerp, is another puzzle.

The cats also apparently had a function as guardians, perhaps ecifically against vermin, though here we lack literary evidence, and some ay have been foundation sacrifices of the ancient sort, while the vermin ncerned may have been 'spiritual' as well as literal.[132] It seems that, for me reason, they had taken the place that dogs had in earlier ritual deposits; d indeed, dogs seem to disappear from such contexts around the time that ts appear in them. Horses, however, did continue to feature as of old, their ulls being found in walls and under flagstones and floorboards.[133] etween 1500 and 1700 garments were often put into junctures between old d new parts of buildings, or doorways, and knotted, as if ritually to rminate their function as clothing.[134] This whole repertoire of deposited jects travelled out silently across the English-speaking world; an excellent ctoral thesis has found them to be widespread in colonial Australia.[135] ich acts of symbolic magic are more or less timeless, making the transition Christian culture with ease because they were so private and were parently directed against hostile spiritual powers which could translate sily into new theologies. None the less, they form the latest episode in a ual tradition of deposition which in Britain reaches back as far as the esolithic.

The solid objects hidden in buildings appear to be related to ritual marks aced upon them from the sixteenth century onwards, a custom to which ere seem to be no textual references at all, and the systematic study of hich has been pioneered by Timothy Easton and followed up by Brian ggard, again, and others.[136] The most common are a conjoined pair of V-gns, sometimes multiplied, and a circle with petals inside it, but there are so crosses, circles, P-shapes and other conjoined letters, notably AMR. In e Mendips they were also placed in caves, perhaps to bless those scending into these places, or to pen in forces that dwelt in the depths or d been exorcized to them. They were also possibly carved on to ships and

rtainly on to personal utensils.[137] They are found throughout England and ales, and in English settlements in Australia and America: there seem at esent to be no Scottish data. The significance of any of them is at present known: it has been suggested that the overlapping Vs and AMR represent e Virgin Mary, signifying ‘Virgin of Virgins’ and ‘Ave Maria Regina’, ough why this symbol of late medieval Catholic devotion should have en especially popular in Protestant homes and churches in early modern ast Anglia and the West Country, is baffling. Parallel to etched marks are rn marks, found at entrances and apertures and in walls in buildings of all nds between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. A single piece of al testimony held that these provided protection against fire, and a study of em in East Anglia has suggested that they took the place of prayers to ints after the Reformation.[138] A third kind of symbol in this category are mbols scorched on to ceilings by candles, which seem to be seventeenth-ntury. Again, there is a set repertoire of signs.[139]

All this would seem of interest only to historians of post-Reformation lture – though it should be of a great deal of interest to them – as, though e concept of protective signs is ancient, the symbols used in this case do t seem to be. What is of possible significance to anyone concerned with gan survivals is the existence of certain equivalent markings on external uctures. A succession of bridges was built to carry existing roads over the ain railway line between Manchester and Crewe, laid down in 1840. Each s carvings in the coping stones of the arch, on the keystone and on those at e ends, all the points which took most of the strain of the construction. ey represent a standard repertoire on each, consisting of erect penises and e prints of shoe soles and hands, with the occasional interlocking Vs, own from house interiors and caves as protective markings. The shoes are a design with square toes, obsolete by the early Victorian period, which ould suggest that the sign was by then inherited and traditional.[140] The portance of shoes in protection of buildings has already been emphasized, has their equivalent role in the Roman world, where the erect phallus was common motif carved on stone structures to encourage them to stand up ongly, as well as functioning as a protective symbol in other contexts.[141] e nineteenth-century builders were therefore blessing their work with a set signs that have unmistakable ancient parallels, and one of which has a

ntinuous magical use – though one only recently recognized – since the gh Middle Ages. Whether the apparent gap in the employment of the shoe a symbol during the earlier medieval period can be filled, whether the allus is found on medieval and early modern structures as well, and hether the same set of signs can be recognized on other Victorian works, e all questions that remain to be answered. None the less, whether as a se of survival, revival or parallel development, there is some sort of nnection to be made.

In the 1960s, Anne Ross drew attention to a set of carved stone heads und at various locations in the British Isles, interpreting them as Iron Age date, and as evidence for the cult of the head as a part of pagan 'Celtic' ligion. A museum curator, Sidney Jackson, published an argument that ey were an important part of Britain's historical and folk heritage.[142] espite this, archaeologists lost interest in them, largely because they did not em to belong to datable ancient contexts. In the 1990s a study of them was rried out by a freelance illustrator, John Billingsley, who discovered that e majority that could be dated were seventeenth-century, and that what had en identified as 'Celtic' features in them because of their apparent semblance to faces in Iron Age art – a flat, pear-shaped face, lentoid eyes d oval mouth – were an early modern tradition. None the less, he mphasized that this represented one stage in a long history and prehistory stylized heads in British, and indeed in European, art and architecture. vourite points for their erection in the Tudor and Stuart periods were lls, bridges, gates, doors, windows and gable ends, all places of entry and undary. They therefore seemed to have a quasi-ritual purpose beyond ere decoration, centring on functions of protection and guardianship. They ere especially common in West Yorkshire, where they were made into the neteenth century.[143] Billingsley, however, acknowledged that they could so have been objects of humour and entertainment. Many (across the itish Isles) had a hole in the mouth perfectly suited to hold a clay pipe, hich could then be knocked off by people competing to throw balls at it: an planation which suits both the battered appearance of some heads and ecdotal evidence.[144] Even taking this into account, he could still argue that e frequency with which severed heads are credited with magical and ystical properties in folklore, coupled with the positioning of the early

odern specimens when first erected, sustains the theory that they originally d a protective function. The accumulating body of evidence for other mbols and objects in early modern Britain with just that apparent purpose, mmarized above, may stand in further support of his interpretation. There no evidence at all that they were regarded as having any connection with gan deities, but the very idea that a material object could be invested with herent spiritual power, not instilled into it by ecclesiastical benediction, as itself an inheritance from a pre-Christian world.

A possible final example of such an inheritance, which may fit into the tegory of protective magic, is a case of what could be a survival of the cient tradition of ritual deposits in the earth. Between 2001 and 2008 a tal of thirty-five pits in a valley site in west Cornwall were excavated and vealed to contain swan pelts, magpies, eggs of a variety of birds, birds' aws, quartz pebbles, human hair, fingernails and part of an iron cauldron. ach pit had been carefully lined with a swan pelt. The swan skins have en dated to around 1640, and the construction and stocking of the pits ould have involved a significant number of people over an extended riod, presumably from the neighbouring hamlet of Saveock Water whose habitants worked at a local mill. A stone-lined spring there also proved to ve been given seventeenth-century deposits, including 128 strips of cloth om dresses as well as pins, shoe parts, cherry stones and nail clippings, fore being filled in. Another pit subsequently found, dated to the ghteenth century and containing eggs and the remains of a cat; and other, with parts of a dog and pig, were dated to the 1950s. In an extensive d international publicity campaign in the mass media, the leader of the cavations interpreted the discoveries as evidence for a pagan fertility rite rried on by witches. She added that such an activity would have been tremely dangerous in the period concerned, as any pagan worship was assified as witchcraft and the perpetrators would have been burned at the ake. She suggested that the later pit deposits were evidence that the cult d continued in secret until the present day.[145]

Despite all the attention drawn to them, no proper publication of the cavations has apparently yet been attempted, and so it is difficult to make independent assessment of their implications. On the face of things, the venteenth-century pits, at least, do look as if they may well be sites of

ual deposition, but the interpretation offered by the excavator may be uestioned. If any professional colleague has begun to wonder why the lack evidence for the survival of active paganism in Britain after the early iddle Ages should have been so laboured in these pages, and the lack of y connection of such a religion associated with witchcraft, such public atements may serve as justification enough. Leaving aside this larger issue, d the minor point that people convicted of witchcraft in the early modern nglish realm were not burned but hanged, the perpetrators of these obable rites would only have been in mortal danger if their actions fell into o categories. The first was intentionally to invoke spirits to assist their ork, and the second was to direct the latter maliciously towards the injury other human beings or their possessions.[146] Most other acts of operative agic would have been safe in practice, even if offered for sale to the blic, which is why cunning folk could flourish in large numbers roughout the period and until the nineteenth century. The Cornish pits uld have been the setting for any of a wide range of practices intended to cure protection or good fortune, for which the other evidence considered ove provides an ample context, even while evidence of a surviving pagan itch religion is missing. Such carefully positioned objects and markings stify to a flourishing world of early modern folk magic, much of which as based on the pagan past or even continued acts or images from it, which s hitherto fallen between the disciplines of history, archaeology and lklore studies, and so been largely neglected by all.

Deities

Of all the channels through which pagan ideas and images flowed into ristian culture, by far the most important and effective consisted of the erature, art and orally transmitted stories which depicted the nature and eds of deities. Pre-eminent in this body of tradition was the classical ritage of Greece and Rome, which made the Olympian deities increasingly miliar and beloved figures in Christian Europe as knowledge of the levant texts and works of art permeated slowly through society. The mense respect felt by Christian Europeans for the classical Mediterranean ritage helped to provoke northern peoples such as the medieval Irish and elanders, in turn, to create a literature which featured their own native

ities and the myths which had been told about them. By such means, gan goddesses and gods who, in strict early theology, had to be regarded demons came to be treated with affection and admiration by many ristians of differing denominations and degrees of piety; even though they ere religiously neutered by being seen as figures of allegory or of fiction.

The concern here is with cases in which medieval authors went further, try to find a place within a Christian cosmos for older deities who could accepted and honoured as genuinely potent entities. These authors longed to a scholarly elite, and virtually all of them were based outside itain, but their works were known in it as an aspect of its position as part the international and supranational world of Latin scholasticism.[147] Most the key antique texts on which members of that world depended for their ncept of the universe – above all Aristotle and Plato – taught them that the avenly bodies were animate beings. A ferocious fourth-century Christian ponent of paganism, Julius Firmicus, could still try to salvage the planets, aring their pagan names, as deities who served the supreme god. ugustine of Hippo, most influential of all the Church Fathers, wondered if ey might indeed be divine beings, of the order of angels. These texts were considered in that great burgeoning of high medieval culture often called e Twelfth-Century Renaissance. It was then that William of Conches ggested that the true God had given to the planetary deities (with their gan names) the forming of mortal bodies and responsibility for particular alities of and influences upon human life. Bernard Silvester then called e planets ‘gods who serve God in person’, and who had been empowered that god to control the natural world. Similar ideas were articulated by thors in the thirteenth century, and the ancient tradition of ritual magic, rpetuated into the Middle Ages, provided those who dared with an portunity to work actively with the planetary deities to attract, enhance d so control their assumed effects on matter and destiny. Thirteenth-ntury scholars such as Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon came close to ving respectability to that work, and although discussion of it waned in the urteenth century, texts that provided its rites and objects which enabled the actment of them continued to be produced.

These ideas came into intellectual prominence again dramatically as part the Florentine Renaissance in the work of such major figures as Marsilio

cino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Ficino supplied hymns to invoke e celestial power of Mercury, Apollo and Venus, modelled on the ancient rphic hymns, while himself entering the Roman Catholic Church as a iest. Pico went further, to argue again for the propriety of investing aterial objects ritually with the blessings of the planetary deities, and ough he was condemned for this by one pope, he was then absolved by other. Even his most determined literary opponent, the Spanish bishop dro Garcia, conceded that the one true god had entrusted the planets to od spirits which controlled earthly phenomena. Italian intellectuals ntinued to express this belief, and sometimes to enact rites to draw upon e powers of the spirits concerned, into the seventeenth century. The same eas were taken north in the early sixteenth, and given their most famous pression there by the German Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, who eached in full measure both the existence of the planetary deities and the nefits of obtaining their blessings, for those aspects of life especially trusted to them. He specified the details of the rituals which enabled this hievement, and his survey of Renaissance magic became the standard ork on the subject, though never respectable, for British as well as ntinental readers. Indeed, it formed a regular component of the libraries British cunning folk for the next two centuries.[148]

If the planets represented one means by which European intellectuals und a place for pagan deities in the Christian cosmos, an allegorical figure Nature or of Earth was another. Here the process was somewhat different, cause such a figure had not been a centre for important pagan cults as the ddesses and gods identified with the planets had been. Ancient paganism d been notably lacking in veneration of a single maternal Great Goddess ho represented the entire natural world and was identified with the earth in rticular. In ancient Egypt the earth was male.[149] Asia Minor had Great ddesses who protected kingdoms and peoples, and sometimes gave rtility, but they were particular to specific regions: nor were they terchangeable, because they had different attributes.[150] The Sumerians, d then the Babylonians, of Mesopotamia, had at first sight a convincing ddess of Mother Earth, Ninhursaga or Ninhursag, who represented the rth, married the paramount sky god and cared for the wombs of all eatures. On closer inspection, however, she turns out specifically to be the

dwelling power of the desert and mountain lands that ringed Mesopotamia, here the rain shed by her fertilizing husband was needed, and its results ectacular. The Mesopotamian landscape itself was in the charge of fferent deities, its great rivers belonging to the god Enki, the wetlands in southern region to the goddess Ningal, and so on.[151] The single possible se of a northern earth goddess is Nerthus, mentioned in just one source, by e Roman historian Tacitus, as being the main deity of a group of German bes, who regarded her as Mother Earth. The problem here has always been at linguistically what Tacitus says does not work, as 'Nerthus' is not a male name, which of course casts into doubt the accuracy of the rest of his formation. Some scholars have tried to get round the difficulty by turning e deity concerned into an earth god, but the matter will probably never be solved.[152]

The Greeks and Romans had no difficulty in imagining a goddess who presented the earth as a whole: she features in works spanning about a illennium and including authors as disparate as Sophocles, Plato, Lucian, cellus, Proclus, Hesiod and the authors of the Homeric and Orphic mns.[153] Such a figure came sometimes to overlap with a goddess rsonifying Nature, who appears in such Roman works as those of Pliny, rmicus Maternus, Claudian, Macrobius and Damascius, and in the Graeco-gyptian Hermetic Texts: as that list of names indicates, this deity featured uch more prominently towards the end of the ancient world.[154] What all ese sources have in common is that they are works of literature. It is very iking that such a prominent presence for these goddesses (or this sort of ddess) in poems, novels and works of philosophy and science was not atched by any major public cult manifested in inscriptions, temples and tive offerings.[155] Gaia or Ge, the earth goddess of Greece, played a vital rt in the best-known creation myth, but functioned in practice as a minor ity.[156] Rome had a more important goddess of earth, Tellus, yet one with a ry specific role, to quicken the fertilizing power of the cultivated soil. In rship, she was paired with the grain goddess Ceres (and the latter's adowy husband Cerus) on equal terms, and both were accompanied by elve lesser figures with special responsibilities for different aspects of the rming cycle.[157] The Romans could conceive of a grander earth goddess, th a more comprehensive remit, Terra Mater, or Mother Earth, but she

gured in actual cult even less frequently than Gaia. Augustus included her ar the end of a long list of deities to receive sacrifices at a cycle of games, d here there was a conscious philosophical tinge to the innovation: she as accompanied by the Fates and the goddesses of childbirth, to show that th these forces guard the world's fertility.[158] The reason for this screpancy between literature and cult practice in both cultures seems to ve been twofold: that ancient religion tended to be localized, to particular gions, cities and peoples, and also practical, in that deities were invoked cause of the specific activities in which they specialized. Only in phisticated private and initiatory cults of the sort that appeared towards the d of the ancient world, most certainly that of Isis as portrayed by Lucius puleius in his *Metamorphoses*, does a paramount goddess feature at the ntre of the cosmos who represents all other goddesses within her and is entified specifically with the whole natural world.

It seems to have been this twofold aspect of Mother Earth or Mother ature – of prominence as a symbolic or allegorical figure in literature ithout much actual worship which could taint her with demonic sociations – which recommended her to some medieval Christians. This obably explains the inclusion of the poem 'Praecatio terrae matris' to her herbals, as described earlier. Another charm discussed above, the ecerbot', took things a stage further, by giving this entity a place in the ristian cosmos, providing fertility in cultivable soil at the behest, and der the control, of the one true god. This pair of texts has a place ongside others in the early Middle Ages which continue to speak of Nature an allegorical figure, though without the element of prayer and invocation hich these two sources bestow on Mother Earth.[159] These works provide a k between antiquity and the twelfth century, when the figure of Nature atured prominently in the work of the French intellectuals Bernard lvester, who has already been mentioned as an exponent of the existence planetary deities, and Alan of Lille.[160] The former made of her a deity rung from the Christian god and given the task of calling matter into being d then acting as the engendering force of fertility and procreation. The ter called her the agent of that god in earthly affairs and maker of humans. ese were poetic romances rather than works of theology, and did not commend any active worship of their goddess; but they presented her as a

›werful and benevolent symbolic entity, a divine female with delegated ›wers over the world who had no place in biblical tradition. As such she as taken up by vernacular poetry from the fourteenth century, featuring in at of such prominent English writers as Geoffrey Chaucer and Edmund ›enser.

The concept of a goddess operating as a great mediatrix between the ristian god and the material world was also expounded in a celestial form, ' early modern scholars interested in the Hermetic tradition of mysticism hich derived ultimately from ancient Egypt or seeking to reveal divine ıths concealed in the remains of ancient civilizations. They include an ıglish occultist, Robert Fludd, and a Continental Jesuit intellectual, who d great influence in Britain, Athanasius Kircher. Both came up with an ıage of the Platonic World Soul as a nude female, identified with the moon d crowned with stars, and linking heaven and earth, and God and ımanity.[161] Once again, literary tradition retained some sense of the divine minine, quite distinct from and greater than female saints, even including e Virgin Mary, as the immediate power responsible for earthly existence. ıis chain of images, stretching from the end of the ancient world to the ginning of the modern, prepared the way for that tremendous burgeoning interest in, and feeling for, a mighty goddess figure, represented by the tural world and the night sky, who was to have such a claim on the neteenth- and twentieth-century imagination. The concept of the ehistoric Great Goddess was one consequence of this development, but the ıpact of the same figure on poetry and fictional prose was as profound.[162]

In making these suggestions, no pretence is offered that the veneration of anetary deities, or the devotion paid to Nature or the female World Soul, 'er represented more than a supplement to mainstream types of medieval d early modern Christianity, taken up by an elite of intellectuals and eative authors. This argument comes close, indeed, to an ironic reversal of e former impression of medieval British religion as remaining essentially gan, while having acquired a thin veneer of Christianity among the elites: e see here a thin elite veneer of paganism over essentially Christian cieties. None of the people who advocated such ideas adopted a pagan ith in preference to the faith of Christ, and there is no sign that such ideas tered down to lower social levels: the cunning folk who read Agrippa and

s kind seem to have done so to get practical results, none ever being corded as having actual pagan beliefs or making much of the old ities.[163] The interest in salvaging room for ancient and non-biblical vinities in a Christian framework pales into insignificance beside the idence of mass devotion, at all social levels, to the Trinity and the saints. ven so, its very existence has a significance of its own, as one more ample of the way in which surviving elements of the old religions could incorporated into Christian cultures during the Middle Ages and beyond.

From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, that blending of ements began to separate at last, under the impact of a growing importance ancient literature in the education of more members of society – ensuring greater knowledge of the Greek and Roman deities in particular – and of a owly weakening grip of Christianity on the allegiance of the British. There ere, in the main, four different responses to these developments. One was mount a more strenuous assertion of the superiority of Christianity over l other religions, and characterize paganism more fiercely as a religion of ckwardness, ignorance and blood thirst. The second was to attempt new conciliations of the two, with a larger role for the ancient religions and eater appreciation of their positive qualities, as a balance and supplement the different virtues of the religion of Christ. The third was to reject all rms of religion in favour of atheism, agnosticism and rationalism, which uld be accompanied by an emphasis on the follies of all religious faith or a more subtle disparagement of Christianity, by asserting that it never racted the loyalty of the bulk of the populace, who retained much of an thinking, primitive and not very admirable paganism. The fourth response as to reject the Christian faith, while turning to the old religions as a placement; a development which had begun by the late Georgian period in itain and slowly produced a complex of modern religious traditions based ancient ideas and images. All of these were modern developments: but ey would hardly have been possible without the manner in which those eas and images had remained lodged in Christian culture, in so many fferent ways, for one and a half millennia.

CONCLUSION

THIS BOOK WAS prefaced with four questions. Two – those of how much anging cultural patterns have influenced scholarly constructions of ancient ganisms, and the extent to which a wide-ranging study has enabled useful mparisons to be made between different periods – should have been self-idently answered in the body of it; though the answers gained will vary to me extent from reader to reader. The overall argument is that both opositions are true to a considerable degree, and repeated attempts have en made in the text to illustrate this truth. The first two questions – hether it is possible to have an archaeology or a history of ancient British ligions, and where the limits of relativism lie in the interpretation of data – quire more extended discussion.

A good starting point for that is a celebration of the sheer richness of the ritage that British paganisms have bequeathed to the present. The quence that begins at Paviland and ends with the Viking graves provides astonishing number and variety of monuments, images, artefacts and ventually) inscriptions, reflecting an equally remarkable range of cultures. his heterogeneity prevents any collective sense of a British paganism. habitants of any of the modern nations that make up Scandinavia, the altic states, Russia, Ireland and most of the Mediterranean (to take a few amples) have no difficulty in identifying their pagan heritage. In each case is embodied in a specific literature, art and archaeology, centred on a rticular pantheon of deities. In Britain the material and written evidence om the historic period represent native Iron Age, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and candinavian religious traditions, together with many more drawn from the her provinces of the Roman Empire. Beyond those stretch at least five es of prehistory, in each of which ritual was expressed through very fferent practices and use of sacred space, which often left a permanent stimony on and in the land in the form of striking carved designs, graves d monuments. The relics of Britain's pagan past offer a powerful allenge and stimulus to the modern imagination, which have been and are pressed in literature, art, music and a definition of personal and collective

irituality (either around or against what these relics seem to embody). ome of them are furthermore major foci of the tourist trade, for both mestic and foreign customers: a trade which forms an increasingly portant part of the British economy.

They also have in common, as has been repeatedly emphasized roughout this book, an ability to defy full understanding and confident terpretation, possessed in varying degrees but in some measure uniting all. ne logical response to this trait is to encourage, as the book has done, a ultiplicity of interpretation, in which different people, and groups of them, construct the pagan past subjectively, according to their own instincts and sires, within the limits of the available evidence. The result of this process a multiplicity of such pasts, forming a portion of different stories of itain, suited to a multi-ethnic, multi-faith society in which individual oice is paramount: and in which Britain is not defined as a people, or a lture, or a nation (or collection of them) but simply as a land, with historic d prehistoric resources which are open to those whose families have been re for fourteen thousand years and those whose families have been here r four. Professional groupings still play a vital and indispensable role in is process, in providing the data and setting out its bounds. Archaeologists cover the material evidence, date it, and identify the different portions of Heritage managers and curators protect sites and objects, display them to e public and provide the known information on them. Historians act, kewise, as the national experts in locating, understanding and translating ritten texts, and explaining what they seem to say. All should then be epared to stand back and let the public dream its own dreams, make its vn uses, and tell its own tales. This scheme can be applied to more or less e whole of history and prehistory, but, for reasons that this book should ve made clear, it is especially relevant to the subject of ancient British ganisms, where the very nature of the phenomenon, let alone an derstanding of its details, is largely unfixed until the coming of history d has only some fixed points after then.

This certainly does not mean an absolute relativism, for nothing that fails fit the evidence can be admissible save as a private fantasy. It is not ssible, for example, to argue convincingly that Stonehenge was built by traterrestrial aliens, Mycenaeans or Egyptians, or dates from any period

her than the third millennium BC. It is equally impossible to declare edibly that it was a factory or a royal dwelling, or anything other than a remonial site. It is now equally at odds with the evidence to publish the ew that Early Neolithic Britain did not know anything resembling warfare, that any active pagan religion survived anywhere in the island, in position to Christianity, throughout the Middle Ages, let alone longer. uch else, however, regarding the nature of prehistoric British society and ligion, and the manner in which ancient paganism blended with medieval d early modern pagan culture, remains entirely open to personal choice. nese points have been signalled throughout the book, together with reasons hy people – especially learned and expert people – have made differing d altering choices at previous stages of modernity. Those involved in ucation in recent decades have become used to the concept of pupil-ntred learning; perhaps we can similarly accustom ourselves to that of blic-centred appreciation, as part of the preparation of the inhabitants of itain to play their part fully as citizens of a democracy (or, with greater nstitutional accuracy, as subjects of a monarchy now rooted in democratic ocesses). In view of what has been said here of the nature of our times, ch a course may seem logical, natural and simple.

In reality, it is likely to prove to be none of those things, because it runs unter to several powerful and persisting traditions, deeply rooted in odern culture. The first of these is the prevalent feeling that professional perts are paid to solve problems and find answers; and this has become if ything more acute in times of greater competition for research funding and new and heavy stress on the need for those who hold university posts to stify their salaries with results, which are commonly held to mean rmanent solutions and discoveries. The second is the love affair of odernity with progress, that expectation that each generation should have eater knowledge than the one before, resulting from better means of quiring it, and (to echo Leonardo da Vinci, whose generation saw the birth this ideology) that pupils who do not surpass their teacher betray their acher. The third is the sense that any community is held together by a mmon identity, which is fashioned with particular strength if it includes a mmon collective story accounting for and celebrating that identity. In a riod when our actual society is becoming so internally diverse, an impulse

recover such an identity, resting on such a story, is likely to become all the ronger. In this sense, the lineage of modern historians and prehistorians etches back to ancient bards, who told tales which inculcated the meaning what it was to be a member of their tribe or clan or kingdom.

Finally, such a course runs counter to one of the oldest and most potent literary forms, the quest romance, which forms alike the basis for the dest piece of fully formed literature to survive in the world, the Epic of lgamesh, and one of the two oldest to survive in Europe, Homer's *dyssey*. This form works especially well for historical and archaeological holarship, which can turn a process of research into just such a romance, which the adventures along the way are those in which the evidence is covered and assembled, and the Grail or Golden Fleece is won when other portion of the past is fully recovered or (even better) a famous zzle about it is – allegedly – solved for good. It is particularly suited to the edium of television or radio, or the newspaper or magazine serial ('The uest for Arthur', 'In Search of the Trojan War', 'On the Trail of Ancient ysteries' …). By contrast, a proposal for a programme or serial on a storical or archaeological subject which tells the viewers or readers what is own and what the options are, and then invites them to choose between em, is unlikely to get commissioned.

It is possible to present counter-arguments to all these observations. ofessional experts who educate and empower the public, and help it to ach informed decisions of its own, are serving their country and society as luably as those who hand it solutions: history and archaeology are simply t like medicine or engineering in this respect. Moreover, if the evidence es not admit of confident solutions, then such a course is also the more nourable and helpful one. It is, furthermore, compatible with a faith in ogress, because it is straightforwardly true that archaeological data creases with each generation as more sites are studied, and understanding it increases with improvements in technology to aid analysis. History is ss fortunate in an accretion of new material, at least when concerned with e ancient and medieval worlds, though new documents are still found or constructed, and those that are known are constantly better collated and lated. Nevertheless, its ability to reinterpret evidence by asking new estions and putting it into broader and better understood contexts, remains

valuable. A common national story intended to generate a common tional identity in a period of diversity and change carries the considerable nger of alienating those members of society who cannot instinctually entify with it. It may be wiser to emphasize that the land and its heritage e held in common, for people to understand in different ways, but with an ual affection and a mutual tolerance. Finally, the process of research mains a quest romance, even if the conclusion consists of drawing back a il on a new scene, which those invited to observe can populate with their vn characters and meanings (always within the bounds of the evidence), as series of quests of their own.

In the final analysis, however, a proposal of such a way of treating the idence for pagan Britain is made not because the author believes it is the ost ethical in social or political terms, but because it is the most honest in ose of scholarship. To admit how much we cannot certainly know, and en to turn that into an opportunity and a strength, rather than an nbarrassment or a handicap, is simply to make the best possible use of a mmon resource. It makes the point that, where the past is concerned, what open-ended, subjective, multivalent and individual can be as valuable as at which is fixed and certain.

NOTES

A Note on Referencing

In setting out these endnotes, a compromise has been made between oviding the fullest possible source references and pressing the bounds of a nerous but still strict word limit. The following conventions have erefore been observed. Instead of a bibliography, full publication details ve been given of each work cited, afresh, in the notes to each chapter, so at they should be relatively easy to trace. For works published before 50, only the place of publication is given, but for those after that year – e great majority – the publisher is named as well. Subtitles to works are nitted unless the titles give absolutely no indication of the nature of what e text contains. As this book is intended for a broad readership in addition a specialist one, and to encourage such readers to follow up any interests hich it may provoke, reference is often to the most accessible form of blication in which information appears. In many cases, the author has read e detailed excavation reports on which a particular case study is based, but s chosen instead to cite a more popularly accessible work in which the nclusions are provided, as long as full references to the detailed reports e furnished in the text, and the data presented is adequate. When the urces involved are ancient or medieval texts, references are to the original apter or section of a work, so that readers may locate them in any modern lition.

The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic: How Ritual Came to Britain

1. In the 1990s the span of time involved was thought to be half a million years. During the 2000s it was pushed back to 750,000, and in 2010 discoveries near Happisburgh, Norfolk, were made in strata between 840,000 and 950,000 years old: Ian Sample, ‘Early Man’, *The Guardian*, 8 July 2010, 2–3. It is entirely possible that the million-year mark will soon be passed.

2. The name was coined by Bryony Coles in 1998. The best recent summary of research upon this drowned region is Vince Gaffrey *et al.*, *Europe’s Lost World*, London, Council for British Archaeology, 2009.

3. For recent views of the debate, see Steven Mithen, *The Prehistory of the Mind*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1996; Nicholas Barton, *English Heritage Book of Stone Age Britain*, London, Batsford, 1997, 91–5; Ian Tattersall and Jeffrey H. Schwartz, *Extinct Humans*, Boulder, CO, Westview, 2000, 215–47: Brian Hayden, *Shamans, Sorcerers and Saints*, Washington DC, Smithsonian, 2003, 88–166; Francesco D'Errico, 'Archaeological Evidence for the Emergence of Language, Symbolism and Music', *World Archaeology*, 17 (2003), 1–70; Timothy Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion*, London, Routledge, 2004, 24–7; Chris Stringer, *Homo Britannicus*, London, Allen Lane, 2006, 190–1; Steven Mithen, 'Searching for the Origins of Language', *British Archaeology*, 93 (2007), 16–19; Alice Roberts, *The Incredible Human Journey*, London, Bloomsbury, 2009, 233–44; and Colin Renfrew and Iain Morley (eds), *Becoming Human*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009; Brian Hayden, 'Neandertal Social Structure?', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 31 (2012), 1–26.

4. Clive Gamble, 'The Social Context for European Palaeolithic Art', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 57 (1991), 3–15; Roberts, *The Incredible Human Journey*, 264–73; Paul Mellars, 'Cognition and Climate', in Renfrew and Morley (eds), *Becoming Human*, 212–31.

5. It was coined by Christopher Stringer and Paul Mellars, in *The Human Revolution*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1989. For subsequent considerations, see Colin Renfrew, *Prehistory*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007, 79–100; and Clive Gamble, *Origins and Revolutions*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 33–58.

6. There is an excellent portrait of Buckland in Deborah Cadbury, *The Dinosaur Hunters*, London, Fourth Estate, 2000. For his specific connection with Paviland, see Stephen Aldhouse-Green's report, cited in n. 7; Marianne Sommer, '"An Amusing Account of a Cave in Wales"', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 37 (2004), 53–74; and Russell Weston, 'John Traherne, FSA and William Buckland's "Red Lady"', *Antiquaries Journal*, 88 (2008), 347–64.

7. Stephen Aldhouse-Green, *Paviland Cave and the 'Red Lady'*, Bristol, Western Academic and Specialist Press, 2000.

8. R. M. Jacobi *et al.*, 'Radiocarbon Chronology for the Early Gravettian of Northern Europe', *Antiquity*, 84 (2010), 37.

9. Paul Pettitt, *The Palaeolithic Origins of Human Burial*, London, Routledge, 2011, 139–214.

10. Paul Pettitt, 'The British Upper Palaeolithic', in Joshua Pollard (ed.), *Prehistoric Britain*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2008, 27–8.

11. William Buckland, *Reliquiae Diluvianae*, London, 1823, 82.

12. Leslie Armstrong, quoted in Paul Bahn and Paul Pettitt, *Britain's Oldest Art*, London, English Heritage, 2009, 14.

13. What follows is based on Paul Pettitt *et al.* (eds), *Palaeolithic Cave Art at Creswell Crags in European Context*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; and Bahn and Pettitt, *Britain's Oldest Art*, supplemented by information gained on visits to the site in 2005 and 2012.

14. I attended a debate over the markings, held on the spot, between various specialists on 17 October 2010.

15. George Nash *et al.*, 'Marks of Sanctity?', *Time and Mind*, 4 (2011), 149–54; Matthew Symonds, 'Rethinking Rock Art', *Current Archaeology*, 270 (2012), 7.

16. The data was summarized in Ruth Charles, 'Incised Ivory Fragments and other Late Palaeolithic Finds from Gough's Cave', *Proceedings of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society*, 18.3 (1989), 400–8. The existing interpretations were summed up in Barton, *English Heritage Book of Stone Age Britain*, 118–22; since then see Larry Barham *et al.*, *In Search of Cheddar Man*, Stroud, Tempus, 1999, 79–82; Pettitt, 'The British Upper Palaeolithic', 47.

17. Frances Lynch *et al.*, *Prehistoric Wales*, Stroud, Sutton, 2000, 21; Paul Pettitt and Paul Bahn, 'Rock Art and Art Mobilier of the British Upper Palaeolithic', in Aron Mazel *et al.* (eds), *Art as Metaphor*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2007, 13.

18. A. P. Currant *et al.*, 'Excavations at Gough's Cave, Somerset 1986–7', *Antiquity*, 63 (1989), 131–6; Jill Cook, 'Preliminary Report on Marked Human Bones from the 1986–1987 Excavations at Gough's Cave, Somerset, England', in R. N. E. Barton *et al.* (eds), *The Late Glacial in North-West Europe*, London, Council for British Archaeology, 1991, 160–8.

19. For the differing views, see Barton, *English Heritage Book of Stone Age Britain*, 118–22; Ruth Charles, 'Creswell, Cheddar and Paviland', *Current Archaeology*, 160 (1998), 131–5; Barham *et al.*, *In Search of Cheddar Man*, 75–82; Timothy Taylor, *The Buried Soul*, London, Fourth Estate, 2002, 79–80; Francis Pryor, *Britain BC*, London, HarperCollins, 2003, 60–5; Stringer, *Homo Britannicus*, 204–18; Roger Jacobi, 'The Late Upper Palaeolithic Collection from Gough's Cave, Cheddar, Somerset, and Human Use of the Cave', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 70 (2004), 1–92; Nicholas Barton, 'The Lateglacial or Latest Palaeolithic Occupation of Britain', in John Hunter and Ian Ralston (eds), *The Archaeology of Britain*, London, Routledge, 2nd edition, 2009, 35–7; Timothy Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, London, Routledge, 2nd edition, 2010, 50.

20. British Museum of Natural History, Press Release 16 February 2011.

21. Jacobi, ‘The Late Upper Palaeolithic Collection from Gough’s Cave’, 89–92; Pettitt, ‘The British Upper Palaeolithic’, 40–1.

22. Pettitt, *Palaeolithic Origins of Human Burial*, 215–60.

23. The exhibit is catalogued as A6473, and I viewed it in 2010. It was recently discussed in ‘Cannibalism in Prehistoric Devon’, *Current Archaeology*, 235 (2009), 6, where Roger Jacobi and Rick Schulting agreed that the defleshing was part of a funeral rite.

24. Hugh Cornwell, pers. comm. 17 October 2010. I am very grateful to Mr Cornwell for his generous hospitality as manager of the caves and museum.

25. Andrew Chamberlain, ‘A Review of the Archaeological Caves of the Creswell Region’, in Bahn and Pettitt, *Britain’s Oldest Art*, 39.

26. This paragraph is based on a composite of John E. Pfeiffer, *The Creative Explosion* (New York, Harper & Row, 1982); Barton, *English Heritage Book of Stone Age Britain*; and Stringer, *Homo Britannicus*.

27. The comprehensive British refutation of the hunting and fertility concepts is in Peter Ucko and Andrée Rosenfeld, *Palaeolithic Cave Art*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967. See also Paul Bahn, ‘Where’s the Beef? The Myth of Hunting Magic in Palaeolithic Art’, in Paul Bahn and Andree Rosenfeld (eds), *Rock Art and Prehistory*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1991, 1–13.

28. His great primary work was *Préhistoire de l’art occidental*, Paris, Editions de l’art Mazenod, 1965. For discussions of the rise and fall of his ideas, see Richard Bradley, *Image and Audience: Rethinking Prehistoric Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, 26–40; and Jean Clottes and David Lewis-Williams, *The Shamans of Prehistory*, New York, Abrams, 1998, 73.

29. Full references are provided in Ronald Hutton, *Shamans*, London, Hambledon and London, 2001, 131, 186–7.

30. The initial article was David Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson, ‘The Signs of All Times’, *Current Anthropology*, 29 (1988), 201–45; the book is Clottes and Lewis-Williams, *The Shamans of Prehistory*.

31. Robert G. Bednarik, ‘European Palaeolithic Art – Typical or Exceptional?’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 12 (1993), 1–8.

32. The debate up to the end of the 1990s was given a useful overview by Robert Layton, ‘Shamanism, Totemism and Rock Art’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 10 (2000), 169–86.

Important contributions since then include David Lewis- Williams, ‘Putting the Record Straight’, *Antiquity*, 77 (2003), 165–70, and *The Mind in the Cave*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2002; Christopher Chippindale, ‘Visionary Experience and the Archaeology of Rock Art’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 13 (2003), 129–32; Patricia Helveston *et al.*, ‘Testing The “Three Stages of Trance” Model’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 13 (2003), 213–24; the discussion by four experts of Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave*, in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 13 (2003), 263–79; Hayden, *Shamans, Sorcerers and Saints*, 142–51; Thomas A. Dowson, ‘Debating Shamanism in Southern African Rock Art’, *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 62 (2007), 49–61, and ‘Re-animating Hunter-gatherer Rock-art Research’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 19 (2007), 378–87; Georges Sauvet *et al.*, ‘Thinking with Animals in Upper Palaeolithic Rock Art’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 19 (2009), 319–36; Homayun Sidky, ‘On the Antiquity of Shamanism and its Role in Human Religiosity’, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 22 (2010), 68–92; David S. Whitley, *Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit*, New York, Prometheus, 2009.

33. Clottes and Lewis-Williams, *The Shamans of Prehistory*, 59.

34. Randall White, *Prehistoric Art*, New York, Abrams, 2003, 121–2; Miranda and Stephen Aldhouse-Green, *The Quest for the Shaman*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2005, 64–5.

35. White, *Prehistoric Art*, 20–1.

36. One of the first statements of this approach was Margaret Conkey, ‘Beyond Art and between the Caves’, in Margaret Conkey *et al.* (eds), *Beyond Art*, San Francisco, California Academy of Sciences, 1997, 343–68.

37. For this see Michel Lorblanchet, *Art Parietal*, Paris, Rouergue, 2010.

38. For interpretations up to the end of the 1980s, see Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, 3–6. Those since are rounded up and discussed in Paul B. Pettitt, ‘The Living Dead and the Dead Living’, in Rebecca Gowland and Christopher Knüsel (eds), *Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2006, 300–6.

39. Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 10, and sources given there.

40. Ibid.

41. I discussed this problem in Ronald Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur: Studies in Paganism, Myth and Magic*, London, Hambledon and London, 2003, 33–5, where I misled some readers into thinking that by pointing out that certain features cannot be seen from the floor I was suggesting that none of these existed. What I was proposing is that they should not be presumed to

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42. Ann Sieveking, *Engraved Magdalenian Plaquettes*, London, British Archaeological Reports, 1987.

43. Steven Mithen, 'To Hunt or to Paint', *Man*, 23 (1988), 671–95; Paul G. Bahn, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Prehistoric Art*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 174.

44. Bahn and Pettitt, *Britain's Oldest Art*, 43–86.

45. Bahn, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Prehistoric Art*, 177.

46. Jean Clottes, 'Recent Studies on Palaeolithic Art', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 6 (1996), 179–89.

47. Michel Lorblanchet, 'From Man to Animal and Sign in Palaeolithic Art', in Howard Murphy (ed.), *Animals into Art*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, 109–43.

48. Ibid.; Jean Clottes, 'The Identification of Human and Animal Figures in European Palaeolithic Art', in Murphy (ed.), *Animals into Art*, 21–56.

49. Sieveking, *Engraved Magdalenian Plaquettes*, passim; Rosemary Powers, 'The Human Form in Palaeolithic Art', *Modern Geology*, 19 (1994), 109–346.

50. Lorblanchet, 'From Man to Animal', passim.

51. On this see Paul Bahn's comments on p. 248 of the debate over the figurines in *Current Anthropology*, 37 (1996); and in 'The "Dead Wood" Stage of Prehistoric Art Studies', in Michel Lorblanchet and Paul G. Bahn (eds), *Rock Art Studies* Oxford, Oxbow, 1993, 51–9.

52. Margherita Mussi *et al.*, 'Echoes from the Mammoth Steppe', in Wil Roebroeks *et al.* (eds), *Hunters of the Golden Age*, Leiden, University of Leiden Press, 2000, 105–24.

53. Aldhouse-Green and Aldhouse-Green, *The Quest for the Shaman*, 45–6.

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56. See particularly Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, London, Routledge, 2000.

57. Brian Fagan, *The Long Summer*, London, Granta, 2004, 22–110; Steven Mithen, *After the Ice*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003, 132–57; Barton, ‘The Lateglacial or Latest Palaeolithic Occupation of Britain’, 25–46; Sebastian Payne, ‘What Was the Old Forest Really Like?’, *British Archaeology* (November–December 2009), 13.

58. Barton, *English Heritage Book of Stone Age Britain*, 135; Derek Yalden, *The History of British Mammals*, London, Academic Press, 1999, 63–88; Fagan, *The Long Summer*, 68–70; Mithen, *After the Ice*, 138–41; Tom Greeves, ‘Dartmoor’s Vanishing Archaeology’, *British Archaeology* (September–October 2009), 33; Barry Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*, London, Yale University Press, 2009, 69–76; Nicky Milner and Steven Mithen, ‘Hunter-Gatherers of the Mesolithic’, in Hunter and Ralston (eds), *The Archaeology of Britain*, 53–6; Christopher Smith, ‘The Population of Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Britain’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 58 (1992), 37–40.

59. Clark’s classic report is J. G. D. Clark, *Excavations at Star Carr*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1954. For recent discussions, see Richard Chatterton, ‘Ritual’ in Chantal Conneller and Graeme Warren (eds), *Mesolithic Britain and Ireland: New Approaches*, Stroud, Tempus, 2006, 101–20; Mithen, *After the Ice*, 134–8; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 61. For the Siberian parallel, see Hutton, *Shamans*, 32.

60. ‘Britain’s Oldest Cemetery Revealed’, *Current Archaeology*, 188 (2003), 327.

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30. Pollard and Reynolds, *Avebury*, 45.

31. Joshua Pollard, 'Memory, Monuments and Middens in the Neolithic Landscape', in Graham Brown *et al.* (eds), *The Avebury Landscape*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2005, 103–14.

32. His ideas on this theme are especially well articulated in his various contributions to Julian Thomas (ed.), *Place and Memory*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007.

33. For strong reminders of this, see John Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, 50; Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Stroud, Sutton, 1999, 83–93; M. J. O'Kelly, 'Neolithic Ireland', in Dáibhí O Cróinín (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, 90.

34. News of this was published in the most popularly accessible form by Alice Roberts, *The Incredible Human Journey*, London, Bloomsbury, 2009, 273–82. I remain very grateful to Dr Roberts for the gift of this book.

35. Chris Scarre *et al.*, 'Megalithic Chronologies', in Göran Burenhult and Suzanne Westergaard (eds), *Stones and Bones: Formal Disposal of the Dead in Atlantic Europe during the Mesolithic–Neolithic Interface*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2003, 65–111.

36. Jan Albert Bakker, *The Dutch Hunebedden*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1992.

37. For an example of both operating in one area, see Chris Scarre, 'Diverse Inspirations', in Burenhult and Westergaard (eds), *Stones and Bones*, 39–52.

38. The evolution of this idea up to the mid 2000s is discussed in Timothy Darvill, *Long Barrows of the Cotswolds and Surrounding Areas*, Stroud, Tempus, 2004, 67–86.

39. Alasdair Whittle *et al.*, 'Building for the Dead', in Alex Bayliss and Alasdair Whittle (eds), *Histories of the Dead* (Cambridge Archaeological Journal Supplement, 2007), 130–7.

40. The most recent declaration of the 'houses of the dead' theory, as established fact, was probably O'Kelly, 'Neolithic Ireland', 90.

41. This interpretation is found among most experts in the British Neolithic between 1930 and 1960, but especially in the many publications of the most distinguished: Gordon Childe, O. G. S. Crawford, Stuart Piggott and Glyn Daniel.

42. O'Kelly, 'Neolithic Ireland', 90.

43. The most prominent British author to assert this idea in the 1970s was probably Colin Renfrew, whose most influential work on the matter was perhaps 'Megaliths, Territories and Populations', in S. J. de Laet (ed.), *Acculturation and Continuity in Atlantic Europe*, Bruges, De Tempei, 1976, 198–220.

44. James Whitley, 'Too Many Ancestors', *Antiquity*, 76 (2002), 119–26.

45. Alasdair Whittle, *The Archaeology of People*, London, Routledge, 2003, 128–32.

46. Whittle *et al.*, *Gathering Time*, 848–914.

47. See, for example, Frances Lynch *et al.*, *Prehistoric Wales*, Stroud, Sutton, 2000, 121; John Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, Stroud, Tempus, 2003, 35; Whittle, *The Archaeology of People*, 130–2.

48. Darvill, *Long Barrows*, 17–18.

49. Ian Kinnes, *Non-Megalithic Long Barrows and Allied Structures in the British Neolithic*, London, British Museum, 1992; David Field, *Earthen Long Barrows*, Stroud, Tempus, 2006.

50. Field, *Earthen Long Barrows*, 132.

51. Miles Russell, *Prehistoric Sussex*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 58–9; and *Monuments of the British Neolithic*, 34–65; with details added from Field, *Earthen Long Barrows*, 127–31, 140–3.

52. Gordon Noble, *Neolithic Scotland*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, 71–101.

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54. Darvill, *Long Barrows*, 34, discusses Daniel's pivotal work.

55. Ibid., 132–65.

56. Ibid., 132–40.

57. Aubrey Burl, 'By the Light of the Cinerary Moon', in C. N. Ruggles and A. W. R. Whittle (eds), *Astronomy and Society in Britain during the Period 4000–1500 BC*, (Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1981), 248–56.

58. John North, *Stonehenge: Neolithic Man and the Cosmos*, London, HarperCollins, 1996, 13–137.

59. E.g. Darvill, *Long Barrows*, 93–5; Field, *Earthen Long Barrows*, 69–70.

60. Bayliss and Whittle (eds), *Histories of the Dead*; Martin Smith and Megan Brickley, 'The Date and Sequence of Use of Neolithic Funerary Monuments', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 25 (2006), 335–55; Don Benson and Alasdair Whittle (eds), *Building Memories: The Neolithic Cotswold Long Barrow at Ascott-under-Wychwood*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007.

61. Alasdair Whittle and Vicki Cummings, *Places of Special Virtue: Megaliths in the Neolithic Landscapes of Wales*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2004, 24–40.

62. George Nash, *The Architecture of Death: Neolithic Tombs in Wales*, Little Logaston, Logaston Press, 2006, 18–20.

63. Whittle and Cummings, *Places of Special Virtue*, 24–40.

64. Ibid., 69–91; Alasdair Whittle, ‘Stones that Float to the Sky’, in Vicki Cummings and Chris Fowler (eds), *The Neolithic of the Irish Sea*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2004, 81–90.

65. Colin Richards, ‘Labouring with Monuments’, in Cummings and Fowler (eds), *The Neolithic of the Irish Sea*, 72–80.

66. Whittle, ‘Stones that Float to the Sky’; George Children and George Nash, *Neolithic Sites of Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire*, Little Logaston, Logaston Press, 1997, 20–1; Steve Burrow, *The Tomb Builders in Wales 4000–3000 BC*, Cardiff, National Museum of Wales, 2006, 26, 112–13.

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76. Whittle *et al.*, *Gathering Time*, 897–8.

77. The latest and most comprehensive study is Alasdair Whittle *et al.*, *The Harmony of Symbols*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1999.

78. Ibid., 356.

79. Roger Mercer, *Hambledon Hill*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1980; Frances Healey, 'Hambledon Hill and its Implications', in Rosamund Cleal and Joshua Pollard (eds), *Monuments and Material Culture*, Salisbury, Hobnob, 2004, 15–38; Roger Mercer and Frances Healey, *Hambledon Hill*, London, English Heritage, 2009; Oliver Harris, 'Emotional and Mnemonic Geographies at Hambledon Hill', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 20 (2010), 357–71.

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82. Michael J. Allen *et al.*, 'Neolithic Causewayed Enclosures and Later Prehistoric Farming', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 74 (2008), 235–322.

83. Julian Thomas, *Rethinking the Neolithic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 35–6; Alasdair Whittle, *Europe in the Neolithic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 266–70; Jan Harding, 'An Architecture of Meaning', in Mark Edmonds and Colin Richards (eds), *Understanding the Neolithic of North-Western Europe*, Glasgow, Cruithne, 1998, 223; Oswald *et al.*, *The Creation of Monuments*, 120–7; Russell, *Monuments of the British Neolithic*, 71–96; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 97–102; Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 69–76.

84. Alistair Barclay and Jan Harding, 'Introduction' in Barclay and Harding (eds), *Pathways and Ceremonies: The Cursus Monuments of Britain and Ireland*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1999, 1.

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92. Suggested by Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 64.

93. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 106–7, 117–18; Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 47–8.

94. Loveday, *Inscribed across the Landscape*, 88–102; Thomas, ‘On the Origins and Development of Cursus Monuments’; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 118–21.

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98. Jan Harding, ‘Pit-Digging, Occupation and Structured Deposition on Rudston Wold, Eastern Yorkshire’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 25 (2006), 109–26.

99. Kirsty Millican, ‘Timber Monuments, Landscape and the Environment in the Nith Valley’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 31 (2012), 27–46.

100. Richard Bradley, ‘Learning from Places’, in Frodsham (ed.), *Neolithic Studies*, 87.

101. Their books were Ronald W. B. Morris, *The Prehistoric Rock Art of Argyll*, Poole, Dolphin, 1977; *The Prehistoric Rock Art of Galloway and the Isle of Man*, Poole, Blandford, 1979; and *The Prehistoric Rock Art of Southern Scotland*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1981; Stan Beckensall and Tim Laurie, *Prehistoric Rock Art of County Durham, Swaledale and Wensleydale*, Durham, County Durham Books, 1998; Stan Beckensall, *British Prehistoric Rock Art*, Stroud, Tempus, 1999; *Prehistoric Rock Art in Northumberland*, Stroud, Tempus, 2000); *Prehistoric Rock Art in Cumbria*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002; *Circles in Stone*, Stroud, Tempus, 2006.

102. Clive Waddington, ‘Putting Rock Art to Use’, in Frodsham (ed.), *Neolithic Studies*, 147–77; ‘Cup and Ring Marks in Context’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 8 (1998), 29–54; and ‘Neolithic Rock Art in the British Isles’, in Aron Mazel *et al.* (eds), *Art as Metaphor*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2007, 49–68; Stan Beckensall. ‘British Prehistoric Rock-Art in the Landscape’, in George Nash and Christopher Chippindale (eds), *European Landscapes of Rock Art*, London, Routledge, 2002, 39–70; Clive Waddington, ‘Rock of Ages’, *British Archaeology* (September 2004), 16–17.

103. Stan Beckensall, ‘Symbols on Stone’, in Frodsham (ed.), *Neolithic Studies*, 139–40.

104. Bradley, ‘Learning from Places’; George Nash, ‘A Scattering of Images’, in Mazel *et al.* (eds), *Art as Metaphor*, 175–95.

105. Bradley, ‘Learning from Places’; *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe*, London, Routledge, 1997, 90–126; and ‘Symbols and Signposts’, in Colin Renfrew and Ezra Zubrow (eds), *The Ancient Mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 95–106; Waddington, ‘Putting Rock Art to Use’; Sara Fairen-Jiménez, ‘British Neolithic Rock Art in its Landscape’, *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 32 (2007), 283–96; George Nash, Review of four titles in *Antiquaries’ Journal*, 91 (2011), 353.

106. A point made by Bradley, *Rock Art*, 5.

107. Andy Jones, ‘Between a Rock and a Hard Place’, in Vicki Cummings and Amelia Pannett (eds), *Set in Stone*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2005, 107–17.

108. See Morris, *The Prehistoric Rock Art of Galloway*.

109. See especially Bradley, ‘Symbols and Signposts’; Paul M. Brown and Graeme Chappell, *Prehistoric Rock Art in the North Yorks Moors*, Stroud, Tempus, 2005, 197–217; Blaze O’Connor, ‘Carving Identity’, in David A. Barrowclough and Caroline Malone (eds), *Cult in Context*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007, 183–90; Robert Wallis, ‘Re-enchanting Rock Art Landscapes’, *Time and Mind*, 2 (2010), 47–70; Kate E. Sharpe, ‘Rock-art and Rough Cuts’, in Mazel *et al.* (eds), *Art as Metaphor*, 151–73.

110. What follows, down to the 1990s, is argued, with full source references, in two previous publications of mine: ‘The Neolithic Great Goddess’, *Antiquity*, 71 (1997), 91–9; and ‘The Discovery of the Modern Goddess’, in Joanne Pearson *et al.* (eds), *Nature Religion Today*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, 89–100; and references should be to those except where additional sources are provided below. A digest of these two works appeared in Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, 32–43, 278–82.

111. Albrecht Dieterich, *Mutter Erde*, Berlin, 1905.

112. Mircea Eliade, *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976, 5.

113. Olaf Petterson, *Mother Earth*, Lund, Regiae Societatis Humanorum Litterorum Lundensis, 1965–6.

114. Samuel D. Gill, *Mother Earth*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987; Tony Swain, ‘The Mother Earth Conspiracy’, *Numen*, 38 (1991), 3–26.

115. E.g. Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1987; Sigfrid Lonegren, *Labyrinths*, Glastonbury, Gothic Image, 1991; Cheryl Straffon, *The Earth Goddess*, London, Blandford, 1997; Kathy Jones, *The Ancient British Goddess*, Glastonbury, Ariadne, 1991. I acknowledge that only two of these authors were actually British, the others being Americans and a Swede, but all except Barbara Mor settled in Britain.

116. Lynn Meskell, ‘Twin Peaks’, in Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris (eds), *Ancient Goddesses* London, British Museum, 1998, 46–62; Ian Hodder, *Catalhöyük*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2006; Steven Mithen, *After the Ice*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003, 88–96; Lynn Meskell *et al.*, ‘Figured Lifeworlds and Depositional Practices at Catalhöyük’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 18 (2008), 139–61; Lauren E. Talalay, *Deities, Dolls and Devices* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993; Lynn Meskell, ‘Goddesses, Gimbutas and the New

Age', *Antiquity*, 69 (1995), 74–86; Naomi Hamilton *et al.*, 'Viewpoint: Can We Interpret Figurines?'; *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 6 (1996), 281–307; Lynn Meskell, 'Masquerades and Misrepresentations', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 10 (2000), 370–2; Whittle, *Europe in the Neolithic*, 64–6; Ruth Tringham and Margaret Conkey, 'Rethinking Figurines', in Goodison and Morris (eds), *Ancient Goddesses*, 22–45; John Chapman, 'Understanding Material Cultural Representation', *Kvinner Arkeologi Norge*, 22–3 (1999), 91–6 (I am grateful to the author for the gift of this piece); Lauren Talalay, 'Archaeological Ms.conceptions', in Moira Macdonald and Linda Hurcombe (eds), *Representations of Gender from Prehistory to the Present*, London, Macmillan, 2000, 3–17; Naomi Hamilton, 'Ungendering Archaeology', ibid., 17–30; Douglass W. Bailey, *Balkan Prehistory*, London, Routledge, 2000; and *Prehistoric Figurines*, London, Routledge, 2005; Catherine Perlès, *The Early Neolithic in Greece*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 256–7; Christine Marangou, 'Figurines and Models', in George A. Papathanassopoulos (ed.), *Neolithic Culture in Greece*, Athens, Nicholas P. Goulandris Foundation, 1996, 146–50; Richard G. Lesure, *Interpreting Ancient Figurines*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011; David W. Anthony, 'The Rise and Fall of Old Europe', in David W. Anthony and Jennifer Y. Chi (eds), *The Lost World of Old Europe*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2010, 39–45; Douglass W. Bailey, 'The Figurines of Old Europe', ibid., 113–27; Colin Renfrew, *The Cycladic Spirit*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1993, 95–105; Diane Bolger, 'Figurines, Fertility, and the Emergence of Complex Society in Prehistoric Cyprus', *Current Anthropology*, 37 (1996), 365–73; A. Bernard Knapp and Lynn Meskell, 'Bodies of Evidence on Prehistoric Cyprus', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 7 (1997), 183–204; Nanno Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1993; O.T. P. K. Dickinson, 'Comments on a Popular Model of Minoan Religion', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 13 (1994), 173–84; Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris, 'Beyond the "Great Mother"', in Goodison and Morris (eds), *Ancient Goddesses*, 113–32; James Alexander Gillivray, *Minotaur*, New York, Hill & Wang, 2000; Cathy Gere, 'Restoring Faith', *History Today*, 59 (July 2009), 48–50; Matthew Haysom, 'The Double Axe', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 29 (2010), 35–55; Caroline Malone, 'God or Goddess', in Goodison and Morris (eds), *Ancient Goddesses*, 148–63; Colin Renfrew, 'Ritual and Cult in Malta and Beyond', in Barraclough and Malone (eds), *Cult in Context*, 8–13; Caroline Malone, 'Ritual, Space and Structure', ibid., 23–4; David A. Barrowclough, 'Putting Cult in Context', ibid., 45–53; Anthony Bonanno, 'Rituals of Life and Rituals of Death', in Daniel Cilia (ed.), *Malta before History*, Malta, Miranda, 2004, 271–87; Anthony Pace, 'The Sites', ibid., 82–3; Ann Monsarrat, 'The Deity: God or Goddess?', ibid., 289–305; C. A. T. Malone *et al.*, 'The Landscape of the Island Goddess?', in M. Maaskant-Kleibrink (ed.), *The Landscape of the Goddess*, Groningen, Archaeological Institute, Groningen University, 1995, 1–17; Elizabeth Shee Twohig, 'A "Mother Goddess" in North-West Europe *c*. 4200–2500',

in Goodison and Morris (eds), *Ancient Goddesses*, 164–79; Stephanie Lynn Budin, *Images of Mother and Child from the Bronze Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011; Katina L. Lillios, *Heraldry for the Dead: Memory, Identity and the Engraved Stone Plaques of Neolithic Iberia*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2008; Chris Scarre, *Landscapes of Neolithic Brittany*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, 227–66. I am very grateful to Professor Lillios for corresponding with me on this issue and sending me a manuscript chapter of her book. For the classic critique of the Goddess Movement by two feminist archaeologists, see Margaret Conkey and Ruth Tringham, 'Archaeologies and the Goddess', in Donna C. Stanton and Abigail J. Stewart (eds), *Feminisms in the Academy*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995, 199–247. I emphasize here that I do not myself make any endorsement of these works, being not sufficiently expert in the archaeology of the lands concerned: I merely recognize their existence. Some of them argue against evidence for goddess worship at all, and some against the worship of a single great and primordial goddess, while others conclude that the data could favour a range of different interpretations. None the less, they all function as critiques of the earlier straightforward use of the data concerned as proof of an original Great Mother Goddess.

117. Nicole Loraux, 'What is a Goddess?', in Pauline Schmitt Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women in the West. Volume One*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1992, 11–44; Juliette Wood, 'The Concept of the Goddess', in Sandra Billington and Miranda Green (eds), *The Concept of the Goddess*, London, Routledge, 1996, 8–25; Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris, 'Exploring Female Divinity', in Goodison and Morris (eds), *Ancient Goddesses*, 6–21; Joan Goodnick Westenholz, 'Goddesses of the Ancient Near East', ibid., 63–82; Mike Parker Pearson, 'From Ancestor Cult to Divine Religion', *British Archaeology*, 45 (1999), 10–11.

118. Bryony and John Coles, *Sweet Track to Glastonbury*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1986, 81.

119. Clive Jonathan Bond, 'Walking the Track and Believing', in Barrowclough and Malone (eds), *Cult in Context*, 158–66.

120. H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness that was Babylon*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1962, 328.

121. In my first work to deal with the subject, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, I recorded that there was no solid evidence for the Neolithic great goddess, but I also (on p. 40) stated both that it was still possible that her worship had in fact existed and that her modern followers had 'a tremendous power to comfort or inspire'. I still insist both that it remains possible to believe that their goddess was venerated in the Neolithic and that

they represent a present-day religion with as much legitimacy as any other. However, a few of her more extreme devotees have attacked me with such fury, simply because I spoke in that book of an absence of solid evidence, that I can no longer personally regard their faith as comforting or inspiring.

122. Lubbock, *Pre-Historic Times*, 336–447; Dawkins, *Early Man in Britain*, 282–343.

123. Charles Grant B. Allen, *Falling in Love: With Other Essays*, London, 1889, 296–7.

124. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, London, 1871.

125. For this, see the many sources listed above, for the interpretation of causewayed enclosures and tomb-shrines.

126. This tradition is summed up, with references, in Laurence H. Keeley, *War before Civilization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, 9–22.

127. Ibid., 25–141; Raymond C. Kelly, *Warless Societies and the Origins of War*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, 11–161.

128. Kelly, *Warless Societies*, 152–4.

129. Ibid., 148–54.

130. Slavomil Vencl, ‘ Stone Age Warfare’, and John Chapman, ‘The Origins of Warfare in the Prehistory of Central and Eastern Europe’, in John Carman and Anthony Harding (eds), *Ancient Warfare*, Stroud, Sutton, 1999, 57–72, 101–42; David W. Frayer, ‘Offnet: Evidence For a Mesolithic Massacre’, Lawrence Keeley, ‘Frontier Warfare in the Early Neolithic’, and R. Brian Ferguson, ‘Violence and War in Prehistory’, in Debra L. Martin and David W. Frayer (eds), *Troubled Times: Violence and Warfare in the Past*, Amsterdam, Gordon & Breach, 1997, 181–212, 303–19, 321–55; Mark Golito and Lawrence Keeley, ‘Beating Ploughshares back into Swords’, *Antiquity*, 8 (2007), 332–43; Bruno Boulestin *et al.*, ‘Mass Cannibalism in the Linear Pottery Culture at Herxheim’, *Antiquity*, 82 (2008), 968–82.

131. Niall Sharples, *Maiden Castle*, London, Batsford, 1991, 47; Mercer and Healey, *Hambledon Hill*; Martin Smith, ‘Bloody Stone Age’, *Current Archaeology*, 230 (May 2009), 12–19; Paul Hill and Julie Wileman, *Landscapes of War*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 19; R. J. Mercer, ‘The Origins of Warfare in the British Isles’, in Carman and Harding (eds), *Ancient Warfare*, 143–56.

132. Rick J. Schulting and Michael Wysocki, ‘“In this Chambered Tumulus were found Cleft Skulls”’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 71 (2005), 107–38.

133. Mercer, ‘The Origins of Warfare’, 145–50.

134. Martin Smith and Megan Buckley, ‘Boles Barrow’, *British Archaeology*, 93 (March–April 2007), 22–7.

135. Editorial, ‘The New Radiocarbon Dating Revolution’, *Current Archaeology*, 209 (2007), 10–11.

136. Pryor, *Britain BC*, 130; Mercer, ‘The Origins of Warfare’, 144–8.

137. A point made by Mercer, above.

138. Russell, *Monuments of the British Neolithic*, 68.

139. Schulting and Wysocki, ‘“In this Chambered Tumulus”’.

3 The Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age: The Time of the Sacred Circle

1. All points made neatly by Alex Gibson, ‘Round in Circles’, in Rosamund Cleal and Joshua Pollard (eds), *Monuments and Material Culture*, Salisbury, Hob Nob, 2004, 70.

2. The first date is that of Mike Parker Pearson, ‘The Earlier Bronze Age’, in John Hunter and Ian Ralston (eds), *The Archaeology of Britain*, London, Routledge, 2009, 103; the second that of Joshua Pollard, ‘The Construction of Prehistoric Britain’, in Joshua Pollard (ed.), *Prehistoric Britain*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2008, 1–17.

3. For a summary of what was known about these until the end of the 1980s, see Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, 52–62. For updates since then, see Carleton Jones, *Temples of Stone*, Wilton, Co. Cork, Collins, 2007.

4. Michael J. O’Kelly, *Newgrange*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1982; George Eogan, *Knowth and the Passage Tombs of Ireland*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1986; Peter Harbison, *Pre-Christian Ireland*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1988, 56–82.

5. Jeremy Dronfield, ‘Subjective Vision and the Source of Irish Megalithic Art’, *Antiquity*, 69 (1995), 539–49; Debate over Dronfield thesis, with nine contributors, in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 6 (1996), 39–72; Richard Bradley, ‘Decorating the Houses of the Dead’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 11 (2001), 45–67; David Lewis-Williams and David Pearce, *Inside the Neolithic Mind*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2005, 198–249.

6. Richard Bradley, *Image and Audience: Rethinking Prehistoric Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, 51–76.

7. George Nash, ‘Light at the End of the Tunnel’, in Ann Mazel *et al.* (eds), *Art as Metaphor*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2007, 123–50; and ‘The Symbolic Use of Fire’, *Time and Mind*, 1 (2008), 143–5.

8. Frances Lynch, *Prehistoric Anglesey*, Llangefni, Anglesey Antiquarian Society, 1970, 55–65; ‘Sensational New Discoveries at Bryn Celli Ddu’, *British Archaeology*, 89 (2006), 6; George Nash, ‘Graves, Symbols and the Stone Age’, *Current Archaeology*, 211 (2007), 25–30.

9. This is at any rate the traditional interpretation of the deposit, but there may be others. Joshua Pollard suggests that it might have been formed of the pellets regurgitated by birds of prey: pers. comm. 30 May 2012.

10. Lynch, *Prehistoric Anglesey*, 34–40; Nash, ‘The Symbolic Use of Fire’, and ‘Light at the End of the Tunnel’; Editorial, ‘Anglesey’s Neolithic Rock Art’, *Current Archaeology*, 250 (2011), 11.

11. Anna Ritchie, *Prehistoric Orkney*, London, Batsford, 1995, 40–84; Patrick Ashmore, *Maes Howe*, Edinburgh, Historic Scotland, 2000; Colin Richards (ed.), *Dwelling among the Monuments*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2005, 126–7; Richard Bradley, ‘Incised Motifs in the Passage-Graves at Quoyness and Cuween, Orkney’, *Antiquity*, 72 (1998), 387–90; Euan Mackie, ‘Maes Howe and the Winter Solstice’, *Antiquity*, 71 (1997), 338–59; Richard Bradley *et al.*, ‘Discovering Decorated Tombs in Neolithic Orkney’, *Current Archaeology*, 161 (1999), 184–7; Anna Ritchie (ed.), *Orkney in its European Context*, Cambridge, McDonald Institute, 2000; Miles Russell, *Monuments of the British Neolithic*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 157–60; Caroline Wickham-Jones, *Between the Wind and the Water: World Heritage Orkney*, Macclesfield, Windgather, 2006.

12. Colin Renfrew, *Before Civilization*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1973, 132–41; Vicki Cummings and Amelia Pannett, ‘Island Views’, in Vicki Cummings and Amelia Pannett (eds), *Set in Stone: New Approaches to Neolithic Monuments in Scotland*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2005, 14–24.

13. John W. Hedges, *Tomb of the Eagles*, London, John Murray, 1984; Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, 182; John Barber, ‘Death in Orkney’, in Anna Ritchie (ed.), *Neolithic Orkney in its European Context*, Cambridge, McDonald Institute, 2000, 185–7; Stuart Reilly, ‘Processing the Dead in Neolithic Orkney’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 22 (2003), 133–54; Timothy Taylor, *The Buried Soul*, London, Fourth Estate, 2002, 24–6; Richards (ed.), *Dwelling among the Monuments*, 202.

14. I have very happy memories of sitting on the farmhouse kitchen floor one Sunday morning in 1987, with Ronald Simison’s wife Morgan, examining the finds from the site at leisure, and noticing things in the process that would normally have eluded me, such as that some of the

pottery had been decorated by incised patterns made by human fingernails, so small that the job must have been given to children. Ronald (and his sheepdog) then showed me round the monument.

15. Joshua Pollard suggests to me from unpublished information that this is indeed proving to be the case: pers. comm., 30 May 2012.

16. Hedges, *Tomb of the Eagles*; John Barber, 'Isbister, Quanterness and the Point of Cott', in John Barrett and I. A. Kinnes (eds), *The Archaeology of Context in the Neolithic and Bronze Age*, Sheffield, Sheffield University Press, 1988, 42–62; Anna Ritchie, *On the Fringe of Neolithic Europe*, Edinburgh, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2009; Anna Ritchie, 'The Use of Human and Faunal Material in Chambered Tombs in Orkney', in Alex Gibson and Alison Sheridan (eds), *From Sickles to Circles*, Stroud, Tempus, 2004, 92–105.

17. Emphasized by Roy Loveday, 'Double-Entrance Henges', in Alex Gibson and Derek Simpson (eds), *Prehistoric Ritual and Religion*, Stroud, Sutton, 1998, 14–31; Timothy Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 2nd edition, London, Routledge, 2010, 163–7; and Gordon Noble, *Neolithic Scotland*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, 194–218.

18. Stuart and C. M. Piggott, 'Stone and Earth Circles of Dorset', *Antiquity*, 13 (1939), 138–58; Richard Atkinson *et al.*, *Excavations at Dorchester, Oxon*, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1951, 82.

19. Jan Harding, *Henge Monuments of the British Isles*, Stroud, Tempus, 2003; G. J. Barclay, 'The "Henge" and "Hengiform" in Scotland', in Cummings and Pannett (eds), *Set in Stone*, 81–94.

20. Jan Harding, 'Later Neolithic Ceremonial Centres, Ritual and Pilgrimage', in Ritchie (ed.), *Neolithic Orkney*, 31–46.

21. Alex Gibson, *Stonehenge and Timber Circles*, Stroud, Tempus, 1998.

22. Alex Gibson, 'A Neolithic Enclosure at Hindwell', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 15 (1996), 341–8.

23. Mark Brennand and Maisie Taylor, 'Seahenge', *Current Archaeology*, 167 (2000), 417–24; Mark Brennand and Maisie Taylor, 'The Survey and Excavation of a Bronze Age Timber Circle at Holme-next-the-Sea', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 69 (2003), 1–84; Mark Brennand, 'This is Why We Dug Seahenge', *British Archaeology* 78 (2004), 24–9.

24. Aubrey Burl, *The Stone Circles of the British Isles*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976; John Barnatt, *Stone Circles of Britain*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1989, 2 vols.

25. Tom Clare, ‘Megalith Size and the Implications for Our Understanding of Contemporary Society’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 29 (2010), 245–52.

26. John Barnatt, ‘Monuments in the Landscape’, in Gibson and Simpson (eds), *Prehistoric Ritual and Religion*, 92–105; Richard Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, London, Routledge, 2002, 75–7; Peter Herring, ‘Stepping on to the Commons: South-Western Stone Rows’, in Paul Rainbird (ed.), *Monuments in the Landscape*, Stroud, Tempus, 79–98.

27. Alex Gibson, ‘The Timber Circle at Sarn-y-Bryn-Caled’, *Antiquity*, 66 (1992), 84–92.

28. Timothy Darvill and Geoffrey Wainwright, ‘Stone Circles, Oval Settings and Henges in South-West Wales and Beyond’, *Antiquaries’ Journal*, 83 (2003), 9–46.

29. Alex Gibson, ‘Round in Circles’.

30. Gordon Noble *et al.*, ‘Forteviot’, *Current Archaeology*, 231 (2009), 12–19.

31. Julian Thomas, ‘The Late Neolithic Cultural Repertoire’, in Cleal and Pollard (eds), *Monuments and Material Culture*, 98–108; Barclay, ‘The “Henge” and “Hengiform” in Scotland’. 81–94.

32. Richard Bradley, *Stages and Screens*, Edinburgh, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2011.

33. Gibson, ‘Round in Circles’; Harding, *Henge Monuments*, 10–23, 107–12; Richard Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 122.

34. Cf. Russell, *Monuments of the British Neolithic*, 131; Gibson, ‘Round in Circles’; Parker Pearson, ‘The Earlier Bronze Age’, 121.

35. Ralph M. Fyfe and Tom Greeves, ‘The Date and Context of a Stone Row’, *Antiquity*, 82 (2010), 55–70.

36. Richard Bradley, ‘Croft Moraig and the Chronology of Stone Circles’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 71 (2005), 269–81.

37. These differing views are represented by Miles Russell, *Prehistoric Sussex*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 73–9; Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 128–30; Gibson, ‘Round in Circles’; and Aaron Watson, ‘Monuments that Made the World’, in Cleal and Pollard (eds), *Monuments and Material Culture*, 83–97.

38. M. Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina, ‘Stonehenge for the Ancestors’, *Antiquity*, 72 (1998), 308–26; Alasdair Whittle, ‘People and the Diverse Past’, ibid., 852–5; John C. Barrett and Kathryn J. Fewster, ‘Stonehenge’, ibid., 847–52; M. Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina, ‘Stonehenge for the Ancestors. Part Two’, ibid., 855–6.

39. E.g. Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 126–7; Noble, *Neolithic Scotland*, 194–218.

40. Richards (ed.), *Dwelling among the Monuments*, 205–27.

41. Roy Loveday, ‘Dorchester-on-Thames’, in Alistair Barclay and Jan Harding (eds), *Pathways and Ceremonies*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1999, 49–63; John Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, Stroud, Tempus, 2003, 48–50; Timothy Darvill, *Long Barrows of the Cotswolds*, Stroud, Tempus, 2004, 173–82; Noble, *Neolithic Scotland*, 139–93.

42. Lynch, *Prehistoric Anglesey*, 55–65.

43. Cole Henley, ‘Choreographed Monumentality’, in Cummings and Pannett (eds), *Set in Stone*, 95–106.

44. Richards (ed.), *Dwelling among the Monuments*, passim; Colin Renfrew, ‘The Auld Hoose Speaks’, in Ritchie (ed.), *Neolithic Orkney*, 1–30; Nick Card, ‘Neolithic Temples of the Northern Isles’, *Current Archaeology*, 241 (2010), 12–19.

45. David Clarke and Patrick Maguire, *Skara Brae*, Edinburgh, Historic Scotland, 2000; Bradley, ‘Incised Motifs’; Rosamund Cleal and Ann MacSween (eds), *Grooved Ware in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1999; Russell, *Monuments of the British Neolithic*, 157–60; Richards (ed.), *Dwelling among the Monuments*, 122–204; Wickham-Jones, *Between the Wind and the Water*, 50–75. The news about the paintings at the Ness of Brodgar was published in the November–December 2010 issue of *British Archaeology*, p. 9.

46. The discoveries there were publicized in successive issues of *Salon*, 220 (2009) and 238 (2010), and of *British Archaeology*, July–August and September–October 2010; and *Current Archaeology*, 272 (2012), 8.

47. Richards (ed.), *Dwelling among the Monuments*, 249–59; Wickham-Jones, *Between the Wind and the Water*, 91–5.

48. Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 64–6, updated by Jones, *Temples of Stone*, 219–23.

49. Frances Lynch *et al.*, *Prehistoric Wales*, Stroud, Sutton, 2000, 122–5.

50. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 185–7; Trevor Kirk, ‘Memory, Tradition and Materiality’, in Vicki Cummings and Chris Fowler (eds), *The Neolithic of the Irish Sea*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2004, 233–44.

51. Richard Bradley, *The Good Stones*, Edinburgh, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2000; ‘The Land, the Sky and the Scottish Stone Circle’, in Chris Scarre (ed.), *Monuments and Landscape in Atlantic Europe*, London, Routledge, 2002, 122–38; and *The Moon and the Bonfire*, Edinburgh, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2005, 99–115.

52. Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*, London, Yale University Press, 2009.

53. Bradley, *The Moon and the Bonfire*, contrasted with Adam Welfare, *Great Crowns of Stone*, ed. Stratford Halliday, Edinburgh, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland, 2011.

54. Bradley, ‘The Land, the Sky and the Scottish Stone Circle’; and *The Moon and the Bonfire*, passim.

55. Miles Russell, *Prehistoric Sussex*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 73–9; David Mullin, ‘Evidence of Absence?’, in Cummings and Fowler (eds), *The Neolithic of the Irish Sea*, 185–90; Christopher Tilley, *Interpreting Landscapes*, Walnut Creek, CA, Left Hand Press, 2010, 293–347.

56. Richard Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, London, Routledge, 2002, 89–93.

57. Jim Leary and David Field, ‘Marden: The Unsung Henge’, *Current Archaeology*, 253 (2011), 28–35; Christopher Catling, ‘Sweating at Marsden’, *Current Archaeology*, 255 (2011), 10.

58. G. J. Wainwright, *Mount Pleasant*, London, Society of Antiquaries, 1979; Mark Gillings *et al.*, *Landscape of the Megaliths*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2008, 208–9.

59. Peter J. Ucko *et al.*, *Avebury Reconsidered*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990, 248; Gillings *et al. Landscape of the Megaliths*, 1–128.

60. Gillings *et al.*, *Landscape of the Megaliths*, 118–69, 202–4; Mark Gillings and Joshua Pollard, ‘Non-portable Stone Artefacts and Contexts of Meaning’, *World Archaeology*, 31 (1999), 179–93; and *Avebury*, London, Duckworth, 2004, 62–84.

61. Mike Pitts, ‘Return to the Sanctuary’, *British Archaeology*, 51 (2000), 14–19: Joshua Pollard and Andrew Reynolds, *Avebury*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 109.

62. Alasdair Whittle, *Sacred Mound, Holy Rings*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1997, 2, 125–65.

63. Jim Leary and David Field, *The Story of Silbury Hill*, London, English Heritage, 2010, ch. 5.

64. Ibid., ch. 6.

65. The most recent of a succession of books published by Michael Dames on the subject since 1976 is *Silbury: Resolving the Enigma*, Stroud, History Press, 2010.

66. It was based on the alleged discovery in Richard Atkinson's excavations of 1969–70 of flying ants, which occur in England in late July and early August, in the earliest phase of the mound. Leaving aside the problem that the purpose of the final phase may have been very different, the earth with the dead ants may have been put there at any season; moreover, it now seems uncertain that ants were actually found at all. For all this see Jim Leary, 'The Silbury Myth Buster', *British Archaeology*, 110 (2010), 13.

67. David Keys, 'Silbury's Spiritual Past', *BBC History Magazine*, 8.12 (December 2007), 8–9.

68. I tested this theory by using the resources of a television company, Atlantic Productions, at Silbury on 9 June 2006, when a large flag was raised on the summit, and proved to be visible from all the different points concerned in the henge complex. The article that opened up the possibility of the mound as an observatory of heavenly bodies was Paul Devereux, 'Three-Dimensional Aspects of Apparent Relationships between Selected Natural and Artificial Features within the Topography of the Avebury Complex', *Antiquity*, 65 (1991), 894–8.

69. Martyn Barber *et al.*, 'The Brood of Silbury', in Jim Leary *et al.* (eds), *Round Mounds and Monumentality in the British Neolithic and Beyond*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2010, 153–73.

70. The various press reports at the time lacked vital detail, so I am all the more grateful to Jim Leary for supplying the full results of his dig to me directly: pers. comm. 28 June 2011.

71. An oddity here: the vagaries of pre-modern English spelling have left the river as the Kennet and the villages beside it here as West and East Kennett. By some kind of unspoken convention, however, archaeologists, and so heritage managers, have combined the two versions so that the long barrow, the stone avenue and the palisade enclosures are always spelled West Kennet.

72. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Durrington Walls*, Dorking, Society of Antiquaries, 1971.

73. Editorial, 'Before Stonehenge', *Current Archaeology*, 208 (2007), 17–21; Mike Pitts, 'Stonehenge', *British Archaeology*, 102 (2008), 12–17; Maeve Kennedy, 'The Stonehenge Takeaway', *The Guardian*, 21 December 2009, 14. These published reports have been

supplemented for me by annual personal communications, throughout the project, from Joshua Pollard, and a visit from Mike Parker Pearson.

74. Aubrey Burl, *Great Stone Circles*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999, 91–6; Julian Richards, *Stonehenge: The Story So Far*, Swindon, English Heritage, 2007, 110–12. The results of the 2006 excavation remain unpublished to date, and my information on it derives from Joshua Pollard.

75. A more detailed version of what follows in the next few paragraphs, with full references, may be found in Ronald Hutton, 'The Cultural History of Stonehenge', in Stephen Banfield (ed.), *The Sounds of Stonehenge*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2009, 43–5.

76. SPACES = Strumble-Preseli Ancient Communities and Environment Study.

77. For comments on the two theories, see Timothy Darvill, *Stonehenge*, Stroud, Tempus, 2006, 141–56; and Richards, *Stonehenge*, 215–30.

78. Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 138–41; Anthony Johnson, *Solving Stonehenge*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2008, passim; Richards, *Stonehenge*, 166–77; Mike Parker Pearson *et al.*, 'Who was Buried at Stonehenge?', *Antiquity*, 83 (2009), 23–39; Timothy Darvill and Geoffrey Wainwright, 'Stonehenge Excavations 2008', *Antiquaries Journal*, 89 (2009), 1–20; David Field *et al.*, 'Introducing "Stonehedge"', *British Archaeology*, 111 (2010), 32–54; Darvill, *Stonehenge*, 119–29.

79. Mike Parker Pearson *et al.*, 'Newhenge', *British Archaeology*, 110 (2010), 14–19 Field *et al.*, 'Introducing "Stonehedge"'.

80. Paul Ashbee, 'Stonehenge', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 91 (1998), 139–43.

81. For a discussion of the date of the fall, see Johnson, *Solving Stonehenge*, 139.

82. C. P. Green, 'The Provenance of Rocks Used in the Construction of Stonehenge', J. D. Scourse, 'Transport of the Stonehenge Bluestones', and O. Williams-Thorpe *et al.*, 'The Stonehenge Bluestones', all in Barry Cunliffe and Colin Renfrew (eds), *Science and Stonehenge*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, 257–318; Olwen Williams-Thorpe *et al.*, 'Preseli Dolerite Bluestones', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 25 (2006), 29–46; Aubrey Burl, *Stonehenge*, London, Constable and Robinson, 2006, 133–49; Christopher Catling, 'Message in the Stones', *Current Archaeology*, 212 (2007), 12–19; Brian John, *The Bluestone Enigma*, Newport, Greencroft, 2008, passim; Editorial, 'Missing Stonehenge Circle Did Not Come from Preselis', *British Archaeology*, 109 (2009), 7; Timothy Darvill and Geoffrey Wainwright, 'The Stones of Stonehenge', *Current*

Archaeology, 252 (2011), 28–35; Richard E. Bevins *et al.*, ‘Stonehenge Rhyolitic Bluestone Sources and the Application of Zircon Chemistry’, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 38 (2011), 605–22.

83. Renfrew, *Before Civilization*, 228–34.

84. Mike Parker Pearson, ‘Chieftains and Pastoralists in Neolithic and Bronze Age Wessex’, in Rainbird (ed.), *Monuments in the Landscape*, 34–53. See also John C. Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, 27–8, and Whittle, *Sacred Mound, Holy Rings*, 139–47.

85. Richards, *Stonehenge*, 188–9; Gibson, ‘The Timber Circle at Sarn-y-Bryn-Caled’; Mike Parker Pearson, pers. comm., 7 December 2005.

86. For two late examples (from the 1980s), see Aubrey Burl, *Rites of the Gods*, London, Dent, 1981, 107, 146–7; and David Burnett, *Priestess of Henge*, London, Hamlyn, 1984, 433.

87. Mike Pitts, *Hengeworld*, London, Century, 2000, 37–8; Joshua Pollard, pers. comm., 30 November 2006.

88. Mike Parker Pearson, ‘Stonehenge and the Beginning of the British Neolithic’, in Andrew Meirion Jones *et al.* (eds), *Image, Memory and Monumentality*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2012, 18–28.

89. A. P. Fitzpatrick *et al.*, *The Amesbury Archer and the Boscombe Bowmen*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2011.

90. John Mortimer, *Forty Years’ Researches in British and Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire*, London, 1905, 23–42; Alex Gibson *et al.*, ‘Recent Research at Duggleby Howe’, *Archaeological Journal*, 166, 2009, 38–78.

91. A point made by Chris Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood*, London, Routledge, 2004, 79–100.

92. Sharon Bishop, ‘Tarrant Launceston 15’, *English Heritage Research News* (January 2010), 28–9.

93. Frances Peters, ‘Bronze Age Barrows’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 18 (1999), 255–64; David Field, ‘Bury the Dead in a Sacred Landscape’, *British Archaeology*, 42 (1999), 6–7.

94. Sandy Gerrard, *English Heritage Book of Dartmoor*, London, Batsford, 1997, 59–60.

95. Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 158–68; Richard Bradley and Elise Fraser, ‘Bronze Age Barrows on the Heathlands of Southern England’, *Oxford Journal of*

Archaeology, 29 (2010), 15–33; Paul Garwood, '"Before the Hills in Order Stood"', in Jonathan Last (ed.), *Beyond the Grave*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007, 30–52.

96. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 200–10.

97. Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, 77–8.

98. Ian Brown, *Discovering a Welsh Landscape*, Macclesfield, Windgather, 2004, 46–50.

99. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 203–4; J. R. Turner, 'Ring Cairns, Stone Circles and Related Monuments on Dartmoor', *Devon Archaeological Society Proceedings*, 48 (1990), 27–86.

100. Wickham Jones, *Between the Wind and the Water*, 91–5.

101. Gwilym Hughes, 'Luckington', and Michael Allen and Barbara Applin, 'The Story of the Buckskin Barrow', *Current Archaeology*, 146 (1996), 44–9, 52–6.

102. Parker Pearson, 'The Earlier Bronze Age', 114–19; Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 158–68.

103. For a discussion of it, see Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, 78–9.

104. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 200–3.

105. Peter J. Woodward, *The South Dorset Ridgeway*, Dorchester, Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, 1991, 146.

106. Ann Woodward, *British Barrows*, Stroud, Tempus, 2000, 104–16.

107. See ibid.; Francis Pryor, *Britain BC*, London, HarperCollins, 2003, 250–3; Andrew Jones, 'How the Dead Live', in Pollard (ed.), *Prehistoric Britain*, 189–90; Stuart Needham *et al.*, '"A Noble Group of Barrows"', *Antiquaries Journal*, 90 (2010), 1–39.

108. Jonathan Last, 'Books of Life', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 17 (1998), 43–54; Woodward, *British Barrows*, 45; Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, 81; John Thomas, 'Monuments, Memories and Myths in the Early Bronze Age', *Current Archaeology*, 27 (2008), 153–74.

109. Ann Woodward *et al.*, 'Ritual in Some Early Bronze Age Gravegoods', *Archaeological Journal*, 162 (2005), 31–64.

110. Francis Pryor, *Britain AD*, London, HarperCollins, 2004, 79.

111. Frances Healy and Jan Harding, 'A Thousand and One Things to Do with a Round Barrow', in Last (ed.), *Beyond the Grave*, 53–71.

112. Joanna Brück, ‘Early Bronze Age Burial Practices in Scotland and Beyond’, in Ian Shepherd and Gordon Barclay (eds), *Scotland in Ancient Europe*, Edinburgh, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2004, 185–8.

113. Robert Johnston, ‘Dying, Becoming and Being the Field’, in Jan Harding and Robert Johnston (eds), *Northern Pasts*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2000, 57–70.

114. Cyril Fox, *Life and Death in the Bronze Age*, London, Routledge, 1959, xxvi.

115. Colin Renfrew was the great proponent of this sub-discipline: *Towards an Archaeology of Mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982; and ‘Cognitive Archaeology’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 3 (1993), 248–50.

116. The equivalent ideologues here were Michael Shanks and Ian Hodder, for example in Ian Hodder *et al.* (eds), *Interpreting Archaeology*, London, Routledge, 1995.

117. See, for example, Colin Renfrew, ‘Towards a Cognitive Archaeology’, in Colin Renfrew and Ezra B. W. Zubrow (eds), *The Ancient Mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 3–12; and K. R. Dark, *Theoretical Archaeology*, London, Duckworth, 1995, 9–23. For a later perspective on the common themes that have emerged, Matthew Johnson, *Archaeological Theory*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2nd edition, 2010, 224–7, is succinct.

118. Johnson, *Archaeological Theory*, 219.

119. Colin Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1985.

120. Timothy Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion*, London, Routledge, 2004, 155.

121. The key texts are John Thurnam, ‘On Ancient British Barrows’, *Archaeologia*, 42 (1869), 161–244, and 43 (1871), 285–544; and W. Boyd Dawkins, *Early Man in Britain*, London, 1880, 233–497. For the wider scholarly context and detailed reasoning of them, see Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*, London, Yale University Press, 2009, 299–303.

122. For various stages in this model, see Jacquetta Hawkes, *Early Britain*, London, 1945, 18–23; Jacquetta and Christopher Hawkes, *Prehistoric Britain*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2nd edition, 1949, 66–71; Stuart Piggott, *The Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1954, 270; D.L. Clarke, *Beaker Pottery of Great Britain and Ireland*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970, 276–80.

123. Stephen Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, London, Constable and Robinson, 2006, 210–370; Brian Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, London, Bantam, 2006, passim.

124. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 167–77; Pryor, *Seahenge*, 214–17; Rosamund Cleal, 'The Small Compass of a Grave', in Graham Brown *et al.* (eds), *The Avebury Landscape*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2005, 115–32; Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 133–4; Julian Thomas, 'The Return of the Rinyo-Clacton Folk?', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 20 (2010), 1–15; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 139.

125. Richard Bradley, *The Social Foundations of Prehistoric Britain*, London, Longman, 1984, was perhaps the most celebrated expression of this approach. For a later formulation of it, see Julian Thomas, 'Reading the Body', in P. Garwood *et al.* (eds), *Sacred and Profane*, Oxford, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1991, 33–42.

126. John Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, 27–50, 97–108; Julian Thomas, *Culture and Identity*, London, Routledge, 1996, 180.

127. John Chapman, 'Approaches to Trade and Exchange in Earlier Prehistory', in Andrew Jones (ed.), *Prehistoric Europe*, Chichester, Wiley, 2008, 333–55.

128. Hawkes and Hawkes, *Prehistoric Britain*, 13–14.

129. Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity*, 27–32.

130. Julian Thomas, *Time, Culture and Identity*, London, Routledge, 1999, 96.

131. Harding, *Henge Monuments*, 112–21.

132. Andrew Jones, 'How the Dead Live', in Pollard (ed.), *Prehistoric Britain*, 177–201.

133. Richard Harrison and Volker Heyd, *The Transformation of Europe in the Third Millennium BC*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2008.

134. Barry Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*, London, Yale University Press, 2008, 167–227.

135. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 132–200; Bradley, *The Moon and the Bonfire*, 99–115.

136. This story is told in full in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 49–312.

137. See Adam Stout, *Creating Prehistory*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2008, 173–214 for the first proper history of Watkins's career and that of the Straight Track Club.

138. The story of the professionalization of British archaeology, and its implications for amateurs, is told in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 387–93.

139. What follows draws partly on ideas first aired in Ronald Hutton, ‘Modern Druidry and Earth Mysteries’, *Time and Mind*, 2 (2009), 313–32.

140. J. A. D. Wedd, *Skyways and Landmarks*, Hull, Star Fellowship, 1972, passim; Paul Devereux, ‘The Earth Remembered’, *Ley Hunter*, 96 (1984), 4–7.

141. John Michell, *The Flying Saucer Vision*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1967.

142. John Michell, *The View over Atlantis*, London, Sage, 1969.

143. Ibid., vii, 62–4, 185.

144. Ibid., 64.

145. Janet and Colin Bord, *Mysterious Britain*, London, Garnstone, 1972.

146. Colin Bord, ‘The Cosmic Continent’, *Gandalf’s Garden*, 4 (1969), 4–8.

147. Paul Screeton, *Quicksilver Heritage*, Wellingborough, Thorson’s, 1974, 13, 67–73.

148. John Michell incorporated mystical numerology into *The View over Atlantis*, and developed it in *City of Revelation*, London, Abacus, 1973; see also Michael Behrend, *The Landscape Geometry of Southern Britain*, Cambridge, Institute of Geomantic Research, 1976 for an application of geometry to the earth mysteries. The works on dowsing which had most influence on the movement included Guy Underwood, *The Pattern of the Past*, London, Museum Press, 1976; and Tom Graves, *Dowsing*, London, Turnstone, 1976; and *Needles of Stone*, London, Turnstone, 1978. For an application of the earth mysteries approach to archaeological data, see Francis Hitching, *Earth Magic*, London, Cassell, 1976, who made the Beaker People the villains who ended the Neolithic golden age. Nigel Pennick, *The Ancient Science of Geomancy*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1979, united archaeology with divination and various other esoteric traditions.

149. All played out in the successive issues of the *Ley Hunter* between 1970 and 1984.

150. Don Robins, ‘The Dragon Project and the Talking Stones’, *New Scientist*, 21 October 1982, 6–8; Paul Devereux, five reports in the *Ley Hunter*, 1985–8, entitled ‘Radiation at Megalithic Sites’, as well as *Earth Lights*, London, Turnstone, 1982; *Earth Lights Revelation*, London, Blandford, 1989; and *Places of Power*, London, Blandford, 1990.

151. This story can be followed through successive issues of the *Ley Hunter*, nos 10 to 14, between August and December 1970.

152. For Glyn Daniel's views concerning the policing of truth, see his *A Short History of Archaeology*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1981. For his application of it, see his editorials in *Antiquity* between 1962 and 1982.

153. Adam Stout, *What's Real and What's Not*, Bath, Runetree, 2006, 15–18.

154. Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, *Ley Lines in Question*, Tadworth, World's Work, 1983.

155. Anthony Roberts, 'Contract Killers (Psychic Cripples)', *Shaman*, 4 (1984), 3–4.

156. It has also dispersed quite far in other parts of society among people inclined to mysticism: in 1993 I was at dinner with a marquess, bearing a title established under the Tudors, at his country seat, and he remarked proudly that three leys converged upon his estate.

157. First in Paul Devereux and Robert Forrest, '*Ley Lines in Question* Answered', *Ley Hunter*, 97 (1984), 11–24.

158. Nigel Pennick and Paul Devereux, *Lines on the Landscape*, London, Hale, 1989.

159. Among a large array of titles, my personal favourites are *Shamanism and the Mystery Lines*, London, Quantum, 1992; *The New Ley Hunter's Guide*, Glastonbury, Gothic Image, 1994; *The Long Trip: A Prehistory of Psychedelia*, London, Penguin, 1997; *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Ancient Earth Mysteries*, London, Cassell, 2000; *The Sacred Place*, London, Cassell, 2000; *Stone Age Soundtracks*, London, Vega, 2001; *Haunted Land*, London, Piatkus, 2001; *Mysterious Ancient America*, London, Vega, 2002; *Fairy Paths and Spirit Roads*, London, Chrysalis, 2005.

160. Devereux, 'Three-Dimensional Aspects of Apparent Relationships', as cited above in connection with Silbury.

161. Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*, London, Routledge, 1995; A select list of Nigel Pennick's own works would include *The Oracle of Geomancy*, Chieveley, Capall Bann, 1995; *On the Spiritual Arts and Crafts*, Cambridge, Old England House, 2001; *Masterworks*, Wymeswold, Heart of Albion, 2002; *The Three Fates*, Cambridge, Lanfal, 2004; *Makings*, Cambridge, Old England House, 2004; *New Troy Resurgent*, Cambridge, Spiritual Land, 2005; *The Mysteries of St Martin's*, Cambridge, Spiritual Land, 2005.

162. Jeremy Harte, *Explore Fairy Traditions*, Wymeswold, Heart of Albion, 2004; *English Holy Wells*, 3 vols, Wymeswold, Heart of Albion, 2008.

163. Bob Trubshaw, *Explore Folklore*, 2002; *Explore Mythology*, 2003; *Sacred Places*, 2005; and *Horn Dance or Stag Night*, 2007; all published at Wymeswold by Heart of Albion Press. All

of the four authors cited in notes 161–3 above have treated me with a generosity far beyond anything that I have deserved, and the fact that I can so readily cite their works has been based partly on the kindness with which they have shared them with me.

164. For comment and context, see Trubshaw, *Sacred Places*, 103.

165. Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, 'Our Reasons and Aims', *Shaman*, 4 (1984), 2–3, contextualized by various conversations with Tom between 1996 and the present.

166. One further thought, which may best be inserted here, is that when considering the various leys mapped out by ley-hunters during the 1970s and 1980s, in town and country, it is noticeable that virtually all of them depend on medieval churches for viability. The assumption built into the inclusion of these buildings was, as said, that all could be presumed to have been built over pre-Christian sacred sites. In recent years stress has been laid by architectural historians on the way in which the builders of medieval religious structures incorporated into them principles of mathematics and geometry with a sacred significance: see Thomas Cooke and Peter Kidson, *Salisbury Cathedral*, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1993, 35–91; Eric Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000; and Nigel Hiscock, *The Wise Master Builder*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000. Is it possible that the same principles may have been applied between as well as within buildings, and that, at least in some towns, churches were built in alignment with each other? If so, ley-hunters may have been the first to notice a hitherto unremarked feature of medieval culture, while setting it in an altogether different conceptual framework.

167. A story that is told in detail in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 348–417.

168. Lockyer's work is considered with full references ibid., 314–15, 333, 366, 404.

169. References to substantiate these disproofs are found scattered through the last two-thirds of Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*.

170. Chronicled in John Michell, *A Little History of Astro-Archaeology*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1977, 45–7.

171. H. Boyle Somerville, 'Orientation in Prehistoric Monuments in the British Isles', *Archaeologia*, 73 (1924), 193–224 (quotation on p. 193); and 'Orientation', *Antiquity*, 1 (1927), 31–41.

172. Notably Alexander Thom, of whom much more is about to be said, and C. A. ('Peter') Newham.

173. The most celebrated of his early publications had the same title as the book, and appeared in *Nature*, 200 (1963), 306–8. The book was first published in New York by Doubleday: a hardback edition followed in England in 1966 and a Fontana paperback in 1970.

174. F. Hoyle, 'Stonehenge', *Nature*, 211 (1966), 454–6; and 'Speculations on Stonehenge', *Antiquity*, 40 (1966), 262–76.

175. J. C. Atkinson, 'Moonshine on Stonehenge', *Antiquity*, 40 (1966), 212–16; and 'Hoyle on Stonehenge', *Antiquity*, 41 (1967), 92–5; see also Jacquetta Hawkes, 'God in the Machine', *Antiquity*, 41 (1967), 174–80.

176. Biographical sketches of Thom, with a bibliography of his works, are provided by his son Archie Thom, 'A Personal Note about my Late Father', in C. L. N. Ruggles (ed.), *Records in Stone*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, 3–13; and Hans Metz, 'A Personal Appreciation of Professor Alexander Thom', in the same volume, pp. 14–30. Archie Thom later published a biography, *Walking in All of the Squares* (Argyll Publishing, 1995), and there are further valuable details in Robin Heath, *Alexander Thom*, St Domaels, Bluestone, 2007, 1–24.

177. The best-known of these were *Megalithic Sites in Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1967; *Megalithic Lunar Observatories*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971; and (with Archibald S. Thom), *Megalithic Remains in Britain and Brittany*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978. Hawkins had cited him in *Stonehenge Decoded*, New York, Doubleday, 1965, 151–8.

178. E.g. Michell, *The View over Atlantis*, passim; Screeton, *Quicksilver Heritage*, 22–6; Hitching, *Earth Magic*, 1–24; Pennick, *The Ancient Science of Geomancy*, 31–4.

179. Ronald Hutton, 'Modern Pagan Festivals', *Folklore*, 119 (2008), 251–73.

180. J. N. Lockyer, *Stonehenge and Other British Stone Monuments Astronomically Considered*, London, 1906, passim. I have talked extensively about the adoption of the Wiccan calendar with Fred Lamond, an eyewitness of the process.

181. Thom, *Megalithic Lunar Observatories*, 9.

182. Richard Atkinson, 'Megalithic Astronomy', *Journal of the History of Astronomy*, 6 (1975), 51.

183. Michell, *A Little History of Astro-Archaeology*, 85.

184. Alexander Thom, Archibald S. Thom and Aubrey Burl, *Megalithic Rings*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1980.

185. Aubrey Burl, ‘Science or Symbolism’, *Antiquity*, 54 (1980), 191–200; C. L. N. Ruggles and A. W. R. Whittle (eds), *Astronomy and Society in Britain during the Period 4000–1500 BC*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1981; Douglas C. Heggie, *Megalithic Science*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1981; Douglas C. Heggie (ed.), *Archaeoastronomy in the Old World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982; C. L. N. Ruggles, *Megalithic Astronomy*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1984; John Barnatt and Gordon Moir, ‘Stone Circles and Megalithic Mathematics’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 50 (1984), 197–216.

186. Clive Ruggles, ‘The Stone Alignments of Argyll and Mull’, in Ruggles (ed.), *Records of Stone*, 232–50.

187. Especially his large book *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland*, London, Yale University Press, 1999.

188. John North, *Stonehenge*, London, HarperCollins, 1996.

189. Clive Ruggles, ‘Astronomy and Stonehenge’, in Barry Cunliffe and Colin Renfrew (eds), *Science and Stonehenge*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, 203–29.

190. Julian Richards, *Stonehenge: The Story So Far*, London, English Heritage, 2007, 217–19.

191. Julian Richards, *Stonehenge*, London, English Heritage, 2005, 17.

192. Clive Ruggles *et al.*, *Stonehenge and Ancient Astronomy*, London, Royal Astronomical Society, 2009.

193. Ibid., 6–11; Clive Ruggles, ‘Astronomy, Cosmology, Monuments and the Landscape in Prehistoric Ireland’, in Clive Ruggles *et al.* (eds), *Astronomy, Cosmology and Landscape*, Bognor Regis, Ocarina, 2001, 51–2.

194. Ruggles, ‘Astronomy, Cosmology, Monuments’.

195. Ruggles, *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain*, 128. In justice to him, even the interpreters of the site failed to find any astronomical correlations for eleven of the twenty-four posts, including the one in the centre of the entrance, and those suggested for the others covered such a range that the possibility of coincidence was high: Fachtna McAvoy, ‘The Development of a Neolithic Monument Complex at Godmanchester’, in Mike Dawson (ed.), *Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman Landscapes of the Great Ouse Valley*, London, Council for British Archaeology, 2000, 51–6.

196. E.g. A. S. Thom *et al.*, 'The Bush Barrow Gold Lozenge', *Antiquity*, 62 (1988), 108–19; and Euan McKie, 'Maeshowe and the Winter Solstice', *Antiquity*, 74 (2000), 62–74; and 'The Structure and Skills of British Neolithic Society', *Antiquity*, 76 (2002), 666–8; John Oswin, 'Stones and Solstices on Scotland's Remotest Island', *Current Archaeology*, 227 (2009), 30–7.

197. The main example is Lionel Sims, author of, among other essays, 'The Solarization of the Moon', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 16 (2006), 191–207; 'Entering, and Returning, from the Underworld', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society*, 15 (2009), 386–409; and 'Coves, Cosmology and Cultural Astronomy', in Nicholas Campion (ed.), *Cosmologies*, Lampeter, Sophia Centre Press, 2010, 4–28.

198. Robin Heath, *Sun, Moon and Stonehenge*, Cardigan, Bluestone, 1998; *Sun, Moon and Earth*, Presteigne, Wooden Books, 1999; *Stonehenge*, Presteigne, Wooden Books, 2002; *The Moon and Ancient Calendars*, St Dogmaels, Bluestone, 2009; *www.skyscript.co.uk*.

199. Heath, *Sun, Moon and Stonehenge*, xiii.

200. Ibid., 138.

201. Heath, *Alexander Thom*. My efforts to obtain this text illustrate well the difficulties experienced by mainstream scholars in trying to engage with such alternative viewpoints. It did not exist in the nearest copyright library to me, at Oxford, and when I put in an order through the inter-library loan system, I was informed that no copy was held in any institution in the nation which was able to lend it. A confined copy existed in the British Library in London, and there was one in a branch library at the opposite end of Somerset; but the easiest way to obtain the book was to locate and purchase it on the internet. I found it worth the effort and expense, but many mainstream scholars might not think so, given the peripheral status which the subject is now commonly perceived to have. There is also a further disincentive to them to take any notice of counter-cultural writers: that to do so is to be attacked by such writers in a direct and personal fashion, while to ignore them is only to invite denunciation in general and anonymous terms.

202. *Woodhenge Embryology*, privately published, 2008; *Alexander Thom's Megalithic Yard*, privately published, 2009; *www.definitivestonehenge.com*. In this case there was no problem in obtaining his works, because he sent copies to various scholars, including me, and I am accordingly grateful to him.

203. Anthony Murphy and Richard Moore, *Island of the Setting Sun*, Dublin, Liffey Press, 2006. This would have passed me by completely had I not met Mr Murphy at a conference of earth mysteries researchers at which we were both invited to speak. I found him as charming in person as in print.

204. It may be noted that relations between mainstream and unorthodox ideas about prehistory have been just as strained in Ireland as in Britain: see the bitter remarks of the archaeologist Muirus O'Sullivan, *Megalithic Art in Ireland*, Dublin, Town House and Country House, 1993, 26.

205. Nicholas R. Mann, *Avebury Cosmos*, Winchester, O-Books, 2011. I was sent this title by the author, and thank him for it.

206. Pryor, *Britain BC*, 224.

207. Timothy Darvill, 'Billtown, Isle of Man', *Current Archaeology*, 150 (1996), 233.

208. Christopher Tilley, 'The Power of Rocks', *World Archaeology*, 28 (1996), 161–76.

209. Frances Lynch, 'Colour in Prehistoric Architecture', in Alex Gibson and Derek Simpson (eds), *Prehistoric Ritual and Religion*, Stroud, Sutton, 1998, 62–7; David Trevarthen, 'Illuminating the Monuments', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 10 (2000), 295–315.

210. Vicki Cummings, 'Experiencing Texture and Transformation in the British Neolithic', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 21 (2002), 249–61.

211. Aaron Watson and David Keating, 'The Architecture of Sound in Neolithic Orkney', in Ritchie (ed.), *Neolithic Orkney*, 259–63; and *www.monumental.uk.com/site/research*, accessed 25 November 2010. See also Tom Graves and Liz Poraj-Wilczynnska, '"Spirit of Place" as Process', *Time and Mind*, 2 (2009), 153–66.

212. Joshua Pollard, 'Some Notes on an Acoustic Archaeology', in Stephen Banfield (ed.), *The Sounds of Stonehenge* Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2009, 1–3.

213. Timothy Darvill, 'White on Blonde: Quartz Pebbles and the Use of Quartz at Neolithic Monuments in the Isle of Man and Beyond', in Andrew Jones and Gavin MacGregor (eds), *Colouring the Past*, Oxford, Berg, 2002, 73–91.

214. Ffion Reynolds, 'Regenerating Substances', *Time and Mind*, 2 (2009), 153–66.

215. Vicki Cummings, *A View from the West: The Neolithic of the Irish Sea Zone*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2009, 110–14.

216. Andrew Sherratt, 'Sacred and Profane Substances', in Paul Garwood *et al.* (eds), *Sacred and Profane*, Oxford, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1991, 50–64; Devereux, *The Long Trip*.

217. Woodward, *British Barrows*, 113–14.

218. D. J. Long *et al.*, ‘The Use of Henbane (Hyoscyamus niger L.) as a Hallucinogen at Neolithic “Ritual” Sites’, *Antiquity*, 74 (2000), 49–53.

219. For the importance of this in human societies across the world, see Patrick E. McGovern, *Uncorking the Past*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2009.

220. Libations feature constantly in accounts of the European paganisms best attested from contemporary sources, those of Greece and Rome.

221. E.g. Christopher Chippindale *et al.*, *Who Owns Stonehenge?*, London, Batsford, 1990; Barbara Bender *et al.*, *Stonehenge: Making Space*, Oxford, Berg, 1998; Timothy Darvill *et al.*, *The Cerne Giant*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1999, 125–60; Robert Wallis and Kenneth Lymer (eds), *A Permeability of Boundaries?*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2001.

222. Mainly Robert Wallis and Jenny Blain: Robert Wallis, *Shamans and Neo-Shamans*, London, Routledge, 2003; Jenny Blain and Robert Wallis, *Sacred Sites: Contested Rites/Rights*, Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2007; and many essays written jointly or separately.

223. Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 178–81. Joshua Pollard’s dates are almost the same: 2200–1500, 1500–1200 and 1200–800 BC respectively, which preserves the watershed at 1500: Pollard, ‘The Construction of Prehistoric Britain’, 1–17. Mike Parker Pearson, ‘The Earlier Bronze Age’, divides the Bronze Age simply into Early (2500–1400) and Late (1400–750), but that amounts to virtually the same argument.

224. Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 187–202; Ritchie, *Prehistoric Orkney*, 87–9; Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, 83–93; David Field, ‘Place and Memory in Bronze Age Wessex’, in Joanna Brück (ed.), *Bronze Age Landscapes*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2001, 57–64; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 210–24; plus many of the works on ceremonial monuments cited earlier in this chapter.

225. Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 135–7, which cites all sources including Bradley.

226. Ibid., 134; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 238–9; Derek Yalden, *The History of British Mammals*, London, Academic Press, 1999, 89–116.

227. This argument is made with special clarity by Pryor, *Britain BC*, 262.

228. Rachel Pope, ‘Roundhouses’, *Current Archaeology*, 222 (2008), 14–21.

229. Barbara Bender *et al.*, *Stone Worlds*, Walnut Creek, CA, Left Coast Press, 2007, 127–86.

230. Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 187–202.

4 Late Prehistory: Earthworks, Pits and Bones

1. Alasdair Whittle, Frances Healey and Alex Bayliss, ‘The Domestication of Britain’, *British Archaeology*, 119 (2011), 21.

2. Though Sir Barry Cunliffe reminds me that the lost book of the Greek traveller Pytheas, who long predated Caesar, and of which fragments are preserved in the works of later ancient authors, contained geographical information on Britain: pers. comm., 1 February 2012.

3. Richard Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 276.

4. A point emphasized by Barbara S. Ottaway and Ben Roberts, ‘The Emergence of Metalworking’, in Andrew Jones (ed.), *Prehistoric Europe*, Chichester, Wiley, 2008, 193–225.

5. The dates are recorded as standard by Joshua Pollard, ‘The Construction of Prehistoric Britain’, in Joshua Pollard (ed.), *Prehistoric Britain*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2008, 1–17.

6. Timothy Champion, ‘The Later Bronze Age’, in John Hunter and Ian Ralston (eds), *The Archaeology of Britain*, London, Routledge, 2nd edition, 2009, 127.

7. Barry Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*, London, Yale University Press, 2008, 230–4, 254–69.

8. Jasper Copping, ‘Bronze Age Wreck Yields its Secrets’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 14 February 2010, 10.

9. Francis Pryor, *Britain BC*, London, HarperCollins, 2003, 300.

10. Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 202–22; Champion, ‘The Later Bronze Age’, 131–7; Timothy Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, London, Routledge, 2nd edition, 2010, 225–39; David Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005, 99–100.

11. Pryor, *Britain BC*, 313; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 240–3; Champion, ‘The Later Bronze Age’, 144–5.

12. John Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, Stroud, Tempus, 2003, 98; Stuart Needham, ‘800 BC, The Great Divide’, in Colin Haselgrove and Rachel Pope (eds), *The Earlier Iron Age in Britain and the Near Continent*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007, 39–63.

13. Mark Collard *et al.*, ‘Ironworking in the Bronze Age?’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 72 (2006), 367–421; Stuart Needham, ‘Chronology and Periodisation in the British Bronze Age’, *Acta Archaeologia*, 67 (1996), 137; W. H. Manning, ‘Ironwork Hoards in Iron Age and Roman Britain’, *Britannia*, 3 (1972), 224–50.

14. Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 230–5; Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*, 299–316; Needham, ‘800 BC’; Colin Haselgrove and Rachel Pope, ‘Characterising the Earlier Iron Age’, in Haselgrove and Pope (ed.), *The Earlier Iron Age*, 1–23.

15. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 244–6; Martin Bell, ‘Environment in the First Millennium BC’, in T. C. Champion and J. R. Collis (eds), *The Iron Age in Britain and Ireland*, Sheffield, J. R. Collis, 1996, 5–16; Colin Haselgrove, ‘The Iron Age’, in Hunter and Ralston (eds), *Archaeology of Britain*, 149–74.

16. Derek Yalden, *The History of British Mammals*, London, Academic Press, 1999, 122–8.

17. Haselgrove, ‘The Iron Age’.

18. Richard Bradley and David Yates, ‘After “Celtic” Fields’, in Haselgrove and Pope (eds), *The Earlier Iron Age*, 94–102; Colin Haselgrove, ‘Social Organisation in Iron Age Wessex’, in A. P. Fitzpatrick and Elaine L. Morris (eds), *The Iron Age in Wessex*, Salisbury, Trust for Wessex Archaeology, 1994, 1–3; Pryor, *Britain BC*, 341.

19. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 246–77.

20. Pollard, ‘Construction of Prehistoric Britain’; Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, 107; Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 236–40.

21. Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 234–5; Haselgrove, ‘The Iron Age’, 150.

22. Haselgrove, ‘The Iron Age’, 168–70; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 302–25; J. D. Hill, ‘The Dynamics of Social Change in Later Iron Age Eastern and South-Eastern England *c.* 300 BC–AD 43’, in Colin Haselgrove and Tom Moore (eds), *The Later Iron Age in Britain and Beyond*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007, 16–40.

23. For this see Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*, London, Yale University Press, 2009, 301–3, 337–41.

24. Jacquetta Hawkes, *Early Britain*, London, 1945, 25–31.

25. This process of composition is extensively analysed and deconstructed in several of the revisionist studies cited below.

26. As such, it achieved its last great flowering (to date), in the many works of Miranda Green (subsequently Aldhouse-Green), published in the 1980s and early 1990s.

27. Nick Merriman, ‘Value and Motivation in Prehistory’, in Ian Hodder (ed.), *The Archaeology of Contextual Meanings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, 111–16; J.

D. Hill, ‘Rethinking the Iron Age’, *Scottish Archaeological Review*, 6 (1989), 16–24.

28. John Collis, ‘The Origin and Spread of the Celts’, *Studia Celtica*, 30 (1996), 17–34; ‘Celtic Myths’, *Antiquity*, 71 (1997), 195–201; *The Celts*, Stroud, Tempus, 2003; ‘The Celts as Grand Narratives’, in Andrew Jones (ed.), *Prehistoric Europe*, Chichester, Wiley, 2008, 35–53 and ‘“Reconstructing Iron Age Society” Revisited’, in Tom Moore and Xosé-Lois Armada (eds), *Atlantic Europe in the First Millennium BC*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, 223–41; Simon James, ‘Celts, Politics and Motivation in Archaeology’, *Antiquity*, 72 (1998), 200–9; and *The Atlantic Celts*, London, British Museum, 1999.

29. Ruth and Vincent Megaw, ‘Ancient Celts and Modern Ethnicity’, *Antiquity*, 70 (1996), 175–81; ‘Do the Ancient Celts Still Live?’, *Studia Celtica*, 31 (1997), 107–24; ‘The Mechanism of (Celtic) Dreams’, *Antiquity*, 72 (1998), 432–5; ‘Review of John Collis, *The Celts*’, *Antiquity*, 78 (2004), 733–5.

30. E.g. Gillian Carr and Simon Stoddart, ‘Whither Celts?’, in Carr and Stoddart (eds), *The Celts*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002), 327–31; Miles Russell, *Prehistoric Sussex*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 111; Edward James, *Britain in the First Millennium*, London, Arnold, 2001, 21–2; Ian Brown, *Discovering a Welsh Landscape*, Macclesfield, Windgather, 2004, 59–64; Pryor, *Britain BC*, 465; D. W. Harding, *The Iron Age in Northern Britain*, London, Routledge, 2004, 18–20; Richard Bradley, *Image and Audience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, 13; Andrew P. Fitzpatrick, ‘“Celtic” Iron Age Europe’, in Paul Graves-Brown *et al.* (eds), *Cultural Identity and Archaeology*, London, Routledge, 1996, 238–51. The last of these should be termed not so much a reaction to the revisionist case as part of it, coming as it did near the beginning of the debate.

31. Ellen C. Røyrvik, ‘Western Celts?’, in Barry Cunliffe and John T. Koch (eds), *Celtic from the West*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2010, 83–106; Brian P. McEvoy and Daniel G. Bradley, ‘Irish Genetics and Celts’, ibid., 107–20; Stephen Oppenheimer, ‘A Reanalysis of Multiple Prehistoric Immigrations to Britain and Ireland Aimed at Identifying the Celtic Contributions’, ibid., 121–35.

32. The German was Bernhard Maier, *The Celts*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2003 (the German edition appeared in 2000). In Ireland, for example, an archaeologist, John Waddell, *The Prehistoric Archaeology of Ireland*, Galway, Galway University Press, 1998, 288–9, accepted revisionism, but four years later a distinguished expert in folklore and medieval literature, Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *The Celts*, Wilton, Co. Cork, 2002, could restate the traditional picture as if it had never been questioned.

33. Patrick Sims-Williams, ‘Celtomania and Celtoscepticism’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 36 (1998), 1–35.

34. Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, 294–6; *The Celts*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003; *Europe between the Oceans*, 354–62; 'A Race Apart: Insularity and Connectivity', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 75 (2009), 55–64; John T. Koch, 'Mapping Celticity, Mapping Celticization', in Chris Gosden *et al.* (eds), *Communities and Connections*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, 263–86; Barry Cunliffe and John T. Koch, 'Introduction', in Cunliffe and Koch (eds), *Celtic from the West*, 1–10; quotation on p. 6.

35. At the time of writing, responses are only just beginning, and it may be noted that in their own volume one of the contributors took issue with them (but also with the revisionists): Raimund Karl, 'The Celts from Everywhere and Nowhere', in Cunliffe and Koch (eds), *Celtic from the West*, 39–63. It should perhaps be emphasized that no intervention in this debate is made here, nor any judgement pronounced upon it other than of interest.

36. Grahame Clark 'The Invasion Hypothesis in British Prehistory', *Antiquity*, 40 (1966), 172–89; quotation on p. 186. The most recent citation of its importance seems to have been in Cunliffe, 'A Race Apart', 55.

37. Julius Caesar, *De bello gallico*, V.12.

38. Haselgrove, 'The Iron Age', 169–71.

39. This story is the major theme of Ronald Hutton, *The Druids*, Hambledon, Continuum, 2007, and *Blood and Mistletoe*.

40. For an analysis of each, see Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 1–22.

41. Tacitus, *Annals*, XIV. 28–30.

42. Hutton, *The Druids*, 2–6; and *Blood and Mistletoe*, 12–14.

43. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 30–48.

44. Ibid., 23–30.

45. Philip Crummy *et al.*, *Stanway*, London, Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 250, 444–5. (Though it may be noted that the different contributors promoted the Druidic interpretation with varying degrees of enthusiasm, it was given the most attention.) When the report was summarized in the magazine *British Archaeology* in the March–April issue of 2008 (pp. 28–33), this reading of the burial was also given most prominence, provoking the cover headline 'The Druid Who Saw The Romans Invade UK'.

46. E.g. Sean B. Dunham, ‘Caesar’s Perception of Gallic Social Structures’, in Bettina Arnold and D. Blair Gibson (eds), *Celtic Chiefdom, Celtic State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, 114–15; Maier, *The Celts*, 65–6; Jane Webster, ‘The Just War’, in *TRAC 94: Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1994, 6–7; E. W. Black, ‘The First-Century Historians of Roman Britain’, *Oxford Archaeological Journal*, 20 (2001), 415–28; David Braund, *Ruling Roman Britain*, London, Routledge, 1996, passim; Holly Haynes, *The History of Make-Believe*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003; Mary Beagon, *Roman Nature: The Thought of Pliny the Elder*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992; and see the analyses in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 1–22.

47. Its inception is not likely to be furthered by a tendency among a few authors to misunderstand my own views on the matter. Nick Thorpe, in a review of Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Caesar’s Druids*, London, Yale University Press, 2010, published in *British Archaeology*, 114 (2010), 54, declares that I have suggested that ‘we should scrap the Druids from Iron Age archaeology’. On p. 266 of the book under review by him, Miranda Aldhouse-Green states that I view Druids as ‘creations of fictive writing’ and ‘fabrication’. Neither statement can be found among the hundreds of thousands of words that I have published on the subject: rather, I have always written, as here, that archaeologists should reach their own conclusions on the matter, taking more fully into account the problems now perceived in the details of how ancient authors portrayed Druids. Dr Thorpe provided no source for his assertion. Professor Aldhouse-Green footnoted her statement to an oral presentation that I gave at a Prehistoric Society event in 2008, which she plainly misheard. She goes on (p. 299) to liken an attempt to exclude Druids from a discussion of the Iron Age to Holocaust denial: a demonstration of how emotive the subject has become to some traditionally minded scholars.

48. These would include most of those whose work is cited in reference to forthcoming sections of this chapter.

49. Barry Cunliffe, *Druids: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, 50–84.

50. Aldhouse-Green, *Caesar’s Druids*.

51. This is argued, with full source-references, in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 32–4.

52. See Ronald Hutton, *Shamans*, London, Hambledon and London, 2001. Closer to home, the collection of essays edited by Mary Beard and John North, *Pagan Priests*, London, Duckworth, 1990, repeatedly makes the point that modern historians have imposed the blanket term ‘priest’ on a very wide range of religious functionaries in the ancient Near East and

Mediterranean basin, in a manner which conceals the great variety and difference of function which these people fulfilled.

53. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 32–8.

54. Andrew Fitzpatrick, ‘Druids: Towards an Archaeology’, in Gosden *et al.* (eds), *Communities and Connections*, 302–6.

55. This is the main theme of Hutton, *The Druids*, and *Blood and Mistletoe*.

56. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, is designed to prove this point, and pp. 22–30 are devoted to its manifestation among academic authors in the late twentieth century.

57. The derivation of the name is discussed in Ian Brown, *Beacons in the Landscape*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2009, 2–13.

58. Ibid.; A. H. A. Hogg, *British Hill Forts: An Index*, Oxford, Hillfort Study Group, 1979.

59. The most recent survey volume published by Sir Barry is *Danebury Hillfort*, Stroud, Tempus, 2003. The opinion regarding the pre-eminence of the project was suggested by John Collis, in a review of Sir Barry’s first such volume, in the *Proceedings of the Prehistory Society*, 51 (1985), 348–9.

60. Niall M. Sharples, *English Heritage Book of Maiden Castle*, London, Batsford, 1991, 70–131; Francis Pryor, *Britain AD*, London, HarperCollins, 2004, 63; Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 202–22, 240–52; Barry Cunliffe, ‘Understanding Hillforts’, in Andrew Payne (ed.), *The Wessex Hillforts Project*, London, English Heritage, 2006, 151–62.

61. Collis, review of Cunliffe, *Danebury*; Mark Bowden and Dave McOmish, ‘The Required Barrier’, *Scottish Archaeological Review*, 4 (1987), 84–97; and ‘Little Boxes: More about Hillforts’, ibid., 6 (1989), 12–16; Richard Hingley, ‘Boundaries Surrounding Iron Age and Romano-British Settlements’, ibid., 7 (1990), 96–103; J. D. Hill, ‘How Should We Understand Iron Age Societies and Hillforts?’ in J. D. Hill and C. G. Cumberpatch (eds), *Different Iron Ages*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1995, 45–60; Miles Russell, *Prehistoric Sussex*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 115–24.

62. Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, 350.

63. John Collis, ‘Hill-forts, Enclosures and Boundaries’, in Chapman and Collis (eds), *The Iron Age in Britain and Ireland*, 87–94; J. D. Hill, ‘Hill-forts and the Iron Age of Wessex’, ibid., 95–116; Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, 108–19; David McOmish *et al.*, *The Field Archaeology of the Salisbury Plain Training Area*, Swindon, English Heritage, 2002, 155; Harding, *The Iron Age in*

Northern Britain, 90–3; Paul Frodsham and Colm O'Brien (eds), *Yeavering*, Stroud, Tempus, 2005, 42; Barry Cunliffe 'Understanding Hillforts'; Robert Van de Noort and Henry Chapman, 'Excavating Sutton Common', *British Archaeology*, 96 (2007), 35–9; Bradley, *Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 250–2; Gary Lock, 'Wessex Hillforts after Danebury', in Gosden *et al.* (eds), *Communities and Connections*, 341–55; Ian Armit, 'Hillforts at War', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 73 (2007), 25–37; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 244–71; Brown, *Beacons in the Landscape*, 183–237.

64. Brown, *Beacons in the Landscape*, 214–23.

65. Martin Jones, 'A Feast of Beltain?', in Gosden *et al.* (ed.), *Communities and Connections*, 142–53.

66. Hill, 'How Should We Understand Iron Age Societies and Hillforts?'.

67. Niall Sharples, *Social Relations in Later Prehistory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.

68. Richard Bradley, *The Passage of Arms*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990; Christopher J. Scurfield, 'Bronze Age Metalwork from the River Trent in Nottinghamshire', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 101 (1997), 29–57; Bryan Walters, *The Archaeology of Ancient Dean and the Wye Valley*, Cheltenham, Thornhill, 1992, 42–3; G. A. Wait, *Ritual and Religion in Iron Age Britain*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1985, 15–50; Tim Mallin, 'Place and Space in the Cambridgeshire Bronze Age', in Joanna Brück (ed.), *Bronze Age Landscapes*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2001, 9–22; David T. Yates, 'Bronze Age Field Systems in the Thames Valley', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 18 (1999), 157–70; and 'Bronze Age Agricultural Intensification in the Thames Valley and Estuary', in Brück (ed.), *Bronze Age Landscapes*, 65–82; David Yates and Richard Bradley, 'Still Water, Hidden Depths', *Antiquity*, 324 (2010), 405–15.

69. Cyril Fox, *A Find of the Early Iron Age from Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey*, Cardiff, 1945; Philip Macdonald, *Llyn Cerrig Bach*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2007. The story of how the hoard was found is well retold in Chris Catling, 'The Riddle of the Lake', *Current Archaeology*, 273 (2012), 26–33.

70. Francis Pryor, *English Heritage Book of Flag Fen*, London, Batsford, 1991; Richard Bradley, *An Archaeology of Natural Places*, London, Routledge, 2000, 51–3; Pryor, *Britain BC*, 275.

71. Colin Pendleton, ‘Firstly, Let’s Get Rid of Ritual’, in Brück (ed.), *Bronze Age Landscapes*, 170–8.

72. Richard Bradley, ‘The Interpretation of Later Bronze Age Metalwork from British Rivers’, *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 8 (1979), 3–6; Margaret Ehrenburg, ‘The Occurrence of Bronze Age Metalwork in the Thames’, *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 31 (1980), 1–15; ; Richard Bradley and Ken Gordon, ‘Human Skulls from the River Thames’, *Antiquity*, 62 (1988), 503–9; Bradley, *Image and Audience*, 20.

73. This idea was proposed by Colin Burgess in the mid 1970s: ‘The Bronze Age’, in Colin Renfrew (ed.), *British Prehistory*, London, Duckworth, 1974, 195–7, 311.

74. Strabo, *Geographia*, IV.1.13.

75. This explanation is suggested in Scurfield, ‘Bronze Age Metalwork from the River Trent’, along with that of the deposition of goods to accompany burials in water.

76. Jill York, ‘The Life Cycle of Bronze Age Metalwork from the Thames’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 21 (2002), 77–92, embraces most of the explanations provided above, and a further one: that shining bronze objects sinking into water may have symbolized the setting sun.

77. Frances Lynch *et al.*, *Prehistoric Wales*, Stroud, Sutton, 2000, 183–4.

78. Pryor, *Britain BC*, 275.

79. Ibid., 287.

80. Richard Bradley, *Ritual and Domestic Life in Prehistoric Europe*, London, Routledge, 2005, 145–64.

81. Richard Hingley, ‘Iron, Ironworking and Regeneration’, in Adam Gwilt and Colin Haselgrove (eds), *Reconstructing Iron Age Societies*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1997, 9–18.

82. Pryor, *Britain BC*, 264, 287.

83. David Yates and Richard Bradley, ‘The Siting of Metalwork Hoards in the Bronze Age of South-East England’, *Antiquaries’ Journal*, 90 (2010), 41–72.

84. Fraser Hunter, ‘Iron Age Hoarding in Scotland and Northern England’, in Gwilt and Haselgrove (eds), *Reconstructing Iron Age Societies*, 108–33.

85. This as yet unpublished excavation by Steven Birch is summarized in Aldhouse-Green, *Caesar’s Druids*, 199: the discovery of the lyre bridge was announced in *Salon* (27 May 2012), n.p.

86. Brown, *Beacons in the Landscape*, 140–4; James Morris, ‘Associated Bone Groups’, in Oliver Davis *et al.* (eds), *Changing Perspectives on the First Millennium BC*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2008, 83–98.

87. Barry Cunliffe, ‘Pits, Preconceptions and Preoccupations in the British Iron Age’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 11 (1992), 69–85; Brown, *Beacons in the Landscape*, 145–8.

88. D. Searjeantson and J. Morris, ‘Ravens and Crows in Iron Age and Roman Britain’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 30 (2011), 85–107.

89. Brown, *Beacons in the Landscape*, 145–8.

90. David McOmish. ‘East Chisenbury: Ritual and Rubbish at the British Bronze Age–Iron Age Transition’, *Antiquity*, 70 (1996), 68–76.

91. J. D. Hill, *Ritual and Rubbish in the Iron Age of Wessex*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1995: quotation on p. 126.

92. Hill, ‘Hill-forts and the Iron Age of Wessex’, 109–12.

93. Richard Hingley, ‘The Deposition of Iron Objects in Britain during the Later Prehistoric and Roman Periods’, *Britannia*, 34 (2003), 81–95.

94. Matt Brudenell and Anwen Cooper, ‘Post-Middenism’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 27 (2008), 15–36.

95. James Morris, ‘Associated Bone Groups’, in Oliver Davis *et al.* (eds), *Changing Perspectives on the First Millennium BC*, Oxford, Oxbow, 83–98; the quotation is the subtitle of the essay.

96. This was suggested by Richard Bradley, *The Social Foundations of Prehistoric Britain*, London, Longman, 1984, 163; and still upheld by Pryor, *Britain BC*, 287.

97. The theory was tested experimentally at Moseley Moss, Birmingham, when a particular set of modern Druids, who regularly operated sweat lodges as part of their spiritual practice, conducted one in the presence of archaeologists, and produced a perfect replica of material from a burnt mound: the present author received a personal report on the event by a participant, Mark Graham. For published works which interpret the mounds as the remains of such lodges, or saunas, see Laurence Barfield and Mike Hodder, ‘Burnt Mounds as Saunas, and the Prehistory of Bathing’, *Antiquity*, 61 (1987), 370–9; and Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 215–16.

98. Mike Pitts, ‘Welsh Find May Be Key to Mysterious Mounds’, *British Archaeology*, 105 (2009), 6; and ‘Burnt Mound Theory Tested to Perfection’, ibid., 110 (2010), 6.

99. Brendon Wilkins, ‘Past Orders’, *Current Archaeology*, 256 (2011), 28–35.

100. Miranda Aldhouse-Green provides a beautiful reconstruction of this scenario: *Caesar’s Druids*, 199.

101. Simon Denison, ‘Burial in Water “Normal Rite” for 1000 Years’, *British Archaeology*, 53 (2000), 4.

102. Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, 211–14.

103. Joanna Brück, ‘A Place for the Dead’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 61 (1995), 245–77; ‘Body Metaphors and Technologies of Transformation in the English Middle and Late Bronze Age’ in Brück (ed.), *Bronze Age Landscapes*, 149–60; and ‘Fragmentation, Personhood and the Social Construction of Technology in Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 16 (2006), 297–315.

104. For this see Brown, *Beacons in the Landscape*, 154–7.

105. Strabo, *Geographia*, IV.4.5.

106. Ian Armit has usefully drawn attention to the possible parallels between the use and burial of bits of human body in Iron Age Britain and the employment of ‘medicine bundles’ in native America and the employment of human and animal parts as ‘muti’ magic in modern southern Africa: *Headhunting and the Body in Iron Age Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 204–21.

107. Mike Parker Pearson *et al.*, ‘Evidence for Mummification in Bronze Age Britain’, *Antiquity*, 79 (2005), 529–46.

108. Carly Hilts, ‘Jigsaw Mummies’, *Current Archaeology*, 265 (2012), 42–3.

109. Ian Armit and Victoria Ginn, ‘Beyond the Grave’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 73 (2007), 75–96; Fiona Tucker and Ian Armit, ‘Living with Death in the Iron Age’, *British Archaeology*, 112 (2010), 42–7; Jacqui Mulville *et al.*, ‘Quarters, Arcs and Squares’, in Jane Downes and Anna Ritchie (eds), *Sea Change: Orkney and Northern Europe in the Later Iron Age 300–800*, Balgavies, Pinkfoot Press, 2003, 20–34.

110. Armit, *Headhunting and the Body*, 120–7.

111. Sharples, *English Heritage Book of Maiden Castle*, 118–19; and *Social Relations in Later Prehistory*, 287–309; Barry Cunliffe and Cynthia Poole, *Danebury: Volume Five*, London, Council for British Archaeology, 1991, 418–25; Ann Woodward, *English Heritage Book of*

Shrines and Sacrifice, London, Batsford, 1992, 81–2; Brown, *Beacons in the Landscape*, 145–6, 154–7.

112. Mike Lally, ‘Bodies of Difference in Central Southern England’, in Oliver Davis *et al.* (eds), *Changing Perspectives on the First Millennium BC*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2006, 119–38; Richard Madgwick, ‘Patterns in the Modification of Animal and Human Bones in Iron Age Wessex’, ibid., 99–118; Gillian Carr and Christopher Knüsel, ‘The Ritual Framework of Excarnation by Exposure as the Mortuary Practice of the Early and Middle Iron Ages of Central Southern Britain’, in Gwilt and Haselgrove (eds), *Reconstructing Iron Age Societies*, 167–73.

113. Barry Cunliffe and Cynthia Poole (eds), *The Danebury Environs Porgramme: Volume 2, Part 3*, Oxford, Institute of Archaeology, 2000.

114. Gill Hey *et al.*, 'Iron Age Inhumation Burials at Yarnton, Oxfordshire', *Antiquity*, 73 (1999), 551–62; Barry Cunliffe, *Iron Age Communities in Britain*, London, Routledge, 4th edition, 2005, 552. Sir Barry has suggested to me that some of the tied-up bodies may have been exhibited before eventual burial, after being exposed and dried out, which would make them perfect parallels for the 'mummies' from the Hebrides: pers. comm., 1 February 2012.

115. Rowan Whimster, *Burial Practices in Iron Age Britain*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1981, 75–105; J. D. Hill, 'A New Cart/Chariot Burial from Wetwang, East Yorkshire', *PAST*, 38 (2001), 2–3; I. M. Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries in East Yorkshire*, London, English Heritage, 1991; Angela Boyle, 'Riding into History', *British Archaeology*, 76 (2004), 22–7; Andrew Selkirk, 'Chariot Burials', *Current Archaeology*, 200 (2005), 386–9; Harding, *The Iron Age in Northern Britain*, 35–7; Mike Parker Pearson, 'Food, Sex and Death', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 9 (1999), 43–69; Mandy Jay *et al.*, 'Chariot and Context', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 31 (2012), 161–89.

116. Whimster, *Burial Practices*, passim; Sharples, *English Heritage Book of Maiden Castle*, 118–20; Gale, *Prehistoric Dorset*, 133; Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 310–18; A. P. Fitzpatrick *et al.*, *Archaeological Investigations on the Route of the A27 Westhampnett Bypass*, Salisbury, Wessex Archaeology, 1997; Ralph Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, London, Batsford, 1987, 65–6.

117. Miranda Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, Gloucester, Sutton, 1986, 129–30; Philip Crummy, 'Aristocratic Graves at Colchester', *Current Archaeology*, 132 (1993), 492–4.

118. Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 9–39.

119. Harding, *The Iron Age in Northern Britain*, 79–81, 195–6.

120. The discussion that follows is a condensed and amended form of those found in Hutton, *The Druids*, 93–100; and *Blood and Mistletoe*, 17–18, 24–5, 40–1, 413–16.

121. They are discussed in detail in *Blood and Mistletoe*, 1–17.

122. J. Rives, 'Human Sacrifice among Pagans and Christians', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 85 (1995), 64–85.

123. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, 'The Early Christians and Human Sacrifice', in Jan N. Bremmer (ed.), *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice*, Louvain, Peeters, 2007, 81–102.

124. Jacqueline Borsje, 'Human Sacrifice in Medieval Irish Literature', ibid., 31–54.

125. This is one of the themes of Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*.

126. Perhaps pre-eminently Miranda Aldhouse-Green, 'Humans as Ritual Victims in the Later Prehistory of Western Europe', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 17 (1998), 169–90; and *Dying for the Gods*, Stroud, Tempus, 2001; Hill, *Ritual and Rubbish*, passim; and Sir Barry Cunliffe, in the works cited in n. 129.

127. Previous thoughts of mine on this subject have been summarized in *The Druids*, 130–3, 225; *Blood and Mistletoe*, 27–8; and 'Why Does Lindow Man Matter?', *Time and Mind*, 4 (2011), 135–48. What follows represents a summary and updating.

128. All these analyses and suggestions are found in the report of the team engaged by the British Museum to investigate the body: Ian Stead (ed.), *Lindow Man*, London, British Museum, 1986.

129. E.g. Barry Cunliffe, *Iron Age Communities in Britain*, London, Routledge, 1991, 518; *English Heritage Book of Iron Age Britain*, London, Batsford, 1995, 100; and *The Ancient Celts*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, 192; Miranda (Aldhouse-) Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, London, Batsford, 1986, 128; *Exploring the World of the Druids*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1997, 53; and *Dying for the Gods*, 196, 201; Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 24; Jane Webster, 'Sanctuaries and Sacred Places', in Miranda Green (ed.), *The Celtic World*, London, Routledge, 1995, 445–64; Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, Stroud, Tempus, 1999, 70–1; Timothy Taylor, *The Buried Soul*, London, Fourth Estate, 2002, 145–69. I cheerfully own up to incorporating this view of Lindow Man, as the prevailing orthodoxy, in *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, 194.

130. E.g. Beth Coombe Harris, *In the Grip of the Druids*, Southampton, Mayflower, 1999 (see the preface to this reprint of a 1930s evangelical novel); Jonathan Jones, article in the *Guardian*, 21 June 2007, archived at http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,2107640,00.html.

131. P. V. Glob, *The Bog People*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1969.

132. The source is Tacitus, *Germania*, 40, the famous passage in which he states that seven peoples in the Jutland Peninsula and adjoining areas around its base worshipped an earth goddess called Nerthus, whose sacred chariot was drawn around the region at festivals and then washed in a lake by slaves who were drowned immediately after. The passage – whatever its truth – does not say that the bodies of the slaves were then deposited in water, whereas there is another section of the same work (117) in which Tacitus says that the Germans in general punished those convicted of what they considered to be deeds of shame (cowardice, laziness and sodomy) by pressing them down into bogs with hurdles. This would make a good fit with the wide distribution of the bog

bodies and the violence and apparent contempt with which some were treated; but, again, we have no test of the reliability of his information. Likewise, Adam of Bremen, about a millennium later, describing how a pagan mob in Sweden murdered a Christian missionary for destroying an image of Thor, records how they then mutilated the body and threw it into a bog: *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, II.62.97. Adam is no more reliable a witness than Tacitus, but the tradition of using wetlands as a repository for hated criminals is worthy of notice as present in both texts.

133. For an extreme sceptical view of the Continental evidence, see C. S. Briggs, 'Did They Fall or Were They Pushed?', in R. C. Turner and R. G. Scaife (eds), *Bog Bodies*, London, British Museum, 1995, 168–82. Hilda Ellis Davidson has agreed with the German scholar Karl Struve that there are no accompanying signs of ritual with the Continental bodies, such as animal bones or fires, which makes the hypothesis of sacrifice less likely and that of execution more so: 'Human Sacrifice in the Late Pagan Period', in M. O. H. Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1992, 333.

134. This statistic is discussed in R. M. J. Isser, 'Thinking the Unthinkable', in Karen Meadows *et al.* (eds), *TRAC 96*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1997, 91–100.

135. The local archaeologist who was the first expert on the scene of discovery, Rick Turner, recalled later that he reread Glob as soon as he identified the body as probably ancient: 'Finding Lindow Man', *British Archaeology*, 107 (2009), 18–22. Karin Sanders has termed Glob's book 'a sort of archaeo-literature…loaded with all the appurtenances…that facilitate cross-fertilization between disciplines dedicated to fact…and those committed to fiction': *Bodies in the Bog and the Archaeological Imagination*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009, 20. Her book shows the profound influence exerted by Glob on creative writers, most notably Seamus Heaney, and artists and sculptors.

136. It may be added here that it might also have been a halter by which he was led or pulled to the bog.

137. Robert Connolly, 'Lindow Man', *Anthropology Today*, 1 (1985), 15–17; and 'The Anatomical Description of Lindow Man', in Stead (ed.), *Lindow Man*, 54–62.

138. The texts are summarized in Anne Ross, 'Lindow Man and the Celtic Tradition', in Stead (ed.), *Lindow Man*, 162–9. See Joan Newlon Radner, 'The Significance of the Threefold Death in Celtic Tradition', in Patrick K. Ford (ed.), *Celtic Folklore and Christianity*, Los Angeles, Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, 1983, 180–99.

139. Don Brothwell, *The Bog Man and the Archaeology of People*, London, British Museum, 1986, 96.

140. T. G. Holden, 'The Last Meals of the Lindow Bog Men', and R. G. Scaife, 'Pollen Analysis of the Lindow III Food Residue', in Turner and Scaife (eds), *Bog Bodies*, 76–82, 83–5.

141. J. A. J. Gowlett *et al.*, 'Accelerator Radiocarbon Dating of Ancient Human Remains from Lindow Moss', in Stead (ed.), *Lindow Man*, 22–4; and 'Radiocarbon Accelerator Dating of Ancient Human Remains from Lindow Moss', *Antiquity*, 63 (1989), 71–9; R. L. Otlet *et al.*, 'Report on Radiocarbon Dating of the Lindow Man', in Stead (ed.), *Lindow Man*, 27–30.

142. P. C. Buckland and K. E. Barber, 'Two Views of the Peat Stratigraphy and the Age of the Lindow Bodies'; and R. A. Housley *et al.*, 'Radiocarbon Dating of the Lindow III Bog Body', in Turner and Scaife (eds), *Bog Bodies*, 39–46, 47–62.

143. A. N. Garland, 'Worsley Man, England', in Turner and Scaife (eds), *Bog Bodies*, 104–7.

144. Alison Taylor, 'Burial with the Romans', *British Archaeology*, 69 (2003), 14–19; J. D. Hill, 'Lindow Man's Moustache', *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 March 2004.

145. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 180; Hilda Ellis Davidson, *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe*, London, Routledge, 1993, 98; Briggs, 'Did They Fall or Were They Pushed?', 174–5.

146. *Overkill*, screened on BBC2 on 2 April 1998.

147. I plead guilty to having provoked this, with an article entitled 'How Did Lindow Man Die', published in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 30 January 2004. This drew out J. D. Hill, who was both one of the leading proponents, hitherto, of the interpretation of Iron Age material as evidence for human sacrifice and the curator of the gallery in which Lindow Man was exhibited. His reply, in the same journal on 5 March, made a restatement of the established orthodoxy, to which I replied in turn on 12 March. An article in *The Times* on 22 March quoted Hill as saying that we could never know how Lindow Man had died, which conceded my basic point, but I was misquoted in it as dismissing the interpretation of ritual killing – which I have never done – and calling for the removal of the body from exhibition (a position adopted by a different contributor to the piece), so Dr Hill's statement may have been falsely attributed as well.

148. It included a prominent contribution from J.D. Hill, who now nobly and unequivocally advocated a plurality of interpretation.

149. I was generously invited to deliver the keynote address.

150. Jody Joy, *Lindow Man*, London, British Museum, 2009.

151. Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 324.

152. Bradley, *Ritual and Domestic Life in Prehistoric Europe*, 81–2.

153. Aldhouse-Green, *Caesar's Druids*, 10–11, 72–3; Cunliffe, *Druids*, 36.

154. Aldhouse-Green, *Caesar's Druids*, 73–4, collects the data available by 2009. Eamonn Kelly, Keeper of Antiquities at the National Museum, emphasized the significance of the presence of the bodies close to boundaries, and his interpretation dominated the exhibition, which I visited in 2007. For further information, see Isabella Mulhall, 'The Peat Men from Clonycavan and Oldcroghan', *British Archaeology*, 110 (2010), 34–41.

155. They may also note the apparent paradox that during the sections of this book devoted to the Neolithic, the status of human sacrifice as one plausible interpretation of the data was emphasized in the face of a dominant scholarly tradition which did not do so; whereas when dealing with the Iron Age, the opposite course has been taken. Both approaches are, however, devoted to a consistent end, of opening up as many avenues for the imagination as possible when expert opinion currently inclines to only some.

156. Wait, *Ritual and Religion in Iron Age Britain*, 154–77; Woodward, *The English Heritage Book of Shrines and Sacrifice*, 17, 66; Russell, *Prehistoric Sussex*, 34–8; Frank Hargrave, 'The Hallaton Treasure', *Current Archaeology*, 235 (2009), 36–41; Colin Haselgrove, 'The Iron Age', in Hunter and Ralston (eds), *The Archaeology of Britain*, 160–1.

157. Peter Harbison, *Pre-Christian Ireland*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1988, 155–92; Chris Lynn, 'Navan Fort', *Current Archaeology*, 134 (1993), 44–9; Conor Newman, 'Reflections on the Making of a "Royal" Site in Early Ireland', *World Archaeology*, 30 (1998), 127–41; Edel Bhreathnach (ed.), *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, Dublin, Four Courts, 2005; Richard Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, London, Routledge, 2002, 141–6.

158. See the discussion in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 24–5, and sources there.

159. Christopher Evans and Mark Knight, 'The "Community of Builders": The Barleycroft Post Alignments', in Brück (ed.), *Bronze Age Landscapes*, 83–98.

160. Mark Collard *et al.*, 'Ironworking in the Bronze Age?', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 72 (2006), 367–421.

161. Naomi Field and Mike Parker Pearson, *Fiskerton*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2004.

162. Richard Warner, 'Irish Souterrains', *Archaeologia Atlantica*, 3 (1980), 81–100; Mark Clinton, *The Souterrains of Ireland*, Dublin, Wordwell, 2003.

163. Such as Warner, ‘Irish Souterrains’; and Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, 318–25.

164. Warner, ‘Irish Souterrains’, 95–100.

165. T. E. Wainwright, *The Souterrains of Southern Pictland*, London, Routledge, 1963; Gordon Barclay, ‘Newmill and the Souterrains of Southern Pictland’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 110 (1980), 206; Lloyd and Jennifer Laing, *Celtic Britain and Ireland*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1990, 127–31; Ian Armit, ‘The Abandonment of Souterrains’, ibid., 129 (1997), 577–96; Harding, *The Iron Age in Northern Britain*, 196–9; Hazel Moore and Graeme Wilson, ‘The Langskaill Souterrain’, *Current Archaeology*, 199 (2005), 333–5; Mairi H. Davies, ‘Dominated by Unenclosed Settlement? The Later Iron Age in Eastern Scotland North of the Firth of Forth’, in Haselgrove and Moore (eds), *The Later Iron Age in Britain and Beyond*, 275–8; Nick Cord and Jane Downes, ‘Mine Howe’, in Jane Downes and Anna Ritchie (eds), *Sea Change: Orkney and Northern Europe in the Later Iron Age*, Balgavies, Pinkfoot Press, 2003, 11–19.

166. Evelyn Clark, *Cornish Fogous*, London, Methuen, 1961; Patricia Christie, ‘Cornish Souterrains in the Light of Recent Research’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology*, 16 (1979), 187–213; Charles Thomas, ‘Souterrains in the Sea Province’, in Charles Thomas (ed.), *The Iron Age in the Irish Sea Province*, London, Council for British Archaeology, 1972, 75–8.

167. Rachel Maclean, ‘The Fogou’, *Cornish Archaeology*, 31 (1992), 41–64.

168. Ian M. Cooke, *Mother and Sun: The Cornish Fogou*, Penzance, Men an Tol Studio, 1993. His precise explanation for the structures was that they embodied a mating of the sun with the Earth Goddess. This concept of prehistoric religion goes back to the eighteenth century (as is discussed, with its subsequent history, in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 277–8), but was given a new lease of life in the 1980s by the Goddess Movement. While I have no inherent dislike of the idea, such simple dualisms of mighty cosmological figures do seem to be missing from the luxuriant polytheism of Iron Age British religion when it emerges into history with the arrival of the Romans (for which see below). I was, as far as I know, the first ‘orthodox’ scholar to take notice of Mr Cooke’s ideas, as published in an earlier book of his, when I wrote *Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (pp. 131, 168–70). There I anticipated Rachel Maclean’s argument, by suggesting that fogous were probably refuges, while acknowledging that there was no certainty with regard to their function. My reward was to be singled out by Mr Cooke for bitter attack in his subsequent book, seconded in letters from others in his local counter-cultural community. This fits the pattern, noted when discussing archaeoastronomy, that an academic author who simply ignores the writings of non-academic writers driven by powerful ideological impulses, almost invariably gets better treated by those writers than one who regards them as making a case worth addressing.

169. In *Cornish Archaeology*, 33 (1994), 247–50.

170. Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, 350.

171. A. P. Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 'An Early Iron Age Settlement at Dunston Park, Thatcham', in Ian Barnes *et al.*, *Early Settlement in Berkshire*, Salisbury, Wessex Archaeology, 1995, 65–92; A. P. Fitzpatrick, 'Everyday Life in Iron Age Wessex', in Gwilt and Haselgrove (eds), *Reconstructing Iron Age Societies*, 73–86. The significance of the orientation of roundhouses was first suggested by Wait, in *Ritual and Religion in Iron Age Britain*.

172. Parker Pearson, 'Food, Sex and Death'.

173. By Sir Barry Cunliffe in a note at the end of Parker Pearson's article, above.

174. Pryor, *Britain BC*, 328–30.

175. Leo Webley, 'Using and Abandoning Roudhouses', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 26 (2007), 127–44.

176. Rachel Pope, 'Roundhouses', *Current Archaeology*, 222 (2008), 14–21.

177. Alistair Oswald, 'A Doorway on the Past', in Gwilt and Haselgrove (eds), *Reconstructing Iron Age Societies*, 87–95.

178. Rachel Pope, 'Ritual and the Roundhouse', in Haselgrove and Pope (eds), *The Earlier Iron Age in Britain and the Near Continent*, 204–28.

179. Ann Woodward and Gwilym Hughes, 'Deposits and Doorways', in Haselgrove and Pope (eds), *The Earlier Iron Age in Britain and the Near Continent*, 185–203.

180. These sources are discussed in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 8–17. The modern interpretation of them is the theme of most of the rest of the book.

181. A point well made by Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Seeing the Wood for the Trees*, Aberystwyth, Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2000, 3–10.

182. This was confirmed for me by a visit to the Roman Baths Museum, with this question in mind, on 12 December 2011, and I am very grateful to the staff for assisting me, and admitting me to all the collections, on that occasion.

183. Webster, 'Sanctuaries and Sacred Places'.

184. Andy M. Jones, 'Misplaced Monuments?', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 29 (2010), 203–28.

185. Richard Bradley, ‘From Ritual to Romance’, in Graeme Guilbert (ed.), *Hill-Fort Studies*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1981, 20–7; and *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, 141–6.

186. Mark Gillings and Joshua Pollard, *Avebury*, London, Duckworth, 2004, 85–8; Rosamund M. J. Cleal *et al.*, *Stonehenge in its Landscape*, London, English Heritage, 1995, 360–5, 337–42.

187. Richard Hingley, ‘Esoteric Knowledge?’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 75 (2009), 143–65; ‘Ancestors and Identity in the Later Prehistory of Atlantic Scotland’, *World Archaeology*, 28 (1996), 231–43.

188. Tim Mallin, ‘Place and Space in the Cambridgeshire Bronze Age’, in Brück (ed.), *Bronze Age Landscapes*, 9–22.

189. Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*, 136–41.

190. John C. Barrett, ‘The Mythical Landscapes of the British Iron Age’, in Wendy Ashmore and A. Bernard Knapp (eds), *Archaeologies of Landscape*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1999, 253–68.

191. The history of it is told, with reference to specific cases, in Ronald Hutton, ‘Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 61 (2011), 57–85.

192. Published in London by Routledge & Kegan Paul.

193. In a chain of publications extending from *The Gods of the Celts*, cited above, to *Celtic Goddesses*, London, British Museum, 1995.

194. David Miles *et al. Uffington White Horse and its Landscape*, Oxford, Oxford Archaeology, 2003, 61–78.

195. R. D. Van Arsdell, *Celtic Coinage of Britain*, London, Spink, 1989; Peter Gelling and Hilda Ellis Davidson, *The Chariot of the Sun*, London, Dent, 1969.

196. Alistair Moffat, *The Wall: Rome’s Greatest Frontier*, Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2008, 46, makes the point that some Iron Age tribes in the north of Scotland had names, recorded by Greek and Roman geographers, which echoed those of animals: thus, the Carvetii translate as the Deer People, the Lugi as the Raven People, the Epidii as the Horse People and the Venicones as the Hound People. What is not clear from this is whether they had spiritual connections with the beasts concerned, perhaps even akin to a belief in them as totemic ancestors, or whether the animals simply functioned as emblems, as the unicorn was later to be for Scotland.

197. Van Arsdell, *Celtic Coinage of Britain*; Koch, ‘Mapping Celticity’, 280; Justin Claxton, ‘A Victory for Common Sense’, in Robert Wallis and Kenneth Lymer (eds), *A Permeability of Boundaries?*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2001, 85–92.

198. John Creighton, ‘Visions of Power’, *Britannia*, 26 (1995), 285–301.

199. A fogou at Boleigh in the Lamorna Valley of west Cornwall has a carving at the entrance which Evelyn Clark interpreted as depicting an Iron Age god. Maclean, ‘The Fogou’, discussed this interpretation at length and found nothing to indicate the age or nature of the marking, which she found too weathered for any decisive conclusions to be drawn on the matter. I agree with her, having visited the site in 1984.

200. Bryony Coles has studied these finds as a group, in ‘Wood Species for Wooden Figures’, in Alex Gibson and Derek Simpson (eds), *Prehistoric Ritual and Religion*, Stroud, Sutton, 1998, 163–73. She has ingeniously suggested that the oak figure from Kingsteignton might have been the god Thor, and the one from Roos Carr, which seems to lack one eye, Odin. Neither of these Norse deities, however, seems to be reflected in the many native god-forms revealed by the Roman occupation of Britain. Further details of the figurines can be found in Aubrey Burl, *Rites of the Gods*, London, Dent, 1981, 213, 226–7, and sources cited there. Miranda Aldhouse-Green has suggested that the Ballachulish image may have been a substitute for a human sacrifice: *Dying for the Gods*, 121.

201. News release, ‘Garton Slack Figurines’, *Current Archaeology*, 17 (1969), 170; Melanie Giles, ‘Good Fences Make Good Neighbours?’, in Haselgrove and Moore (eds), *The Later Iron Age in Britain and Beyond*, 235–49.

202. Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain*, Cardinal Edition, London, 1974, 94–171: the idea seems to have featured first as a motif in P. F. Jacobsthal, *Early Celtic Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1944.

203. Sarah Ralph, ‘Broken Pots and Severed Heads’, in David Barrowclough and Caroline Malone (eds), *Cult in Context*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007, 305–1; Armit, *Headhunting and the Body*, passim.

204. Jody Joy, *Iron Age Mirrors*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2010.

205. Miranda Aldhouse-Green, ‘Images in Opposition’, *Antiquity*, 71 (1997), 810–30; ‘Vessels of Death’, *Antiquaries’ Journal*, 78 (1998), 63–84; ‘Back to the Future’, in Amy Gazin-Schwartz and Cornelius J. Holthorf (eds), *Archaeology and Folklore*, London, Routledge, 1999, 48–66; ‘Cosmovision and Metaphor’, *European Journal of Archaeology*, 4 (2001), 209–32; *An Archaeology of Images*, London, Routledge, 2004 (quotation from p. 2); ‘Gender-bending Images’, in Wallis and Lymer (eds), *A Permeability of Boundaries*, 19–29. The same author has herself proposed shamanism as the explanation for the kind of imagery discussed here, which is a perfectly legitimate interpretation though I am myself less happy with it because of the lack, in her

work as in that of many others, of a rigorous definition of the term against which data can be tested: her main work on the subject was co-authored with Stephen Aldhouse-Green: *The Quest for the Shaman*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2005. I also have reservations about the methodology employed, of assembling a long and diffuse checklist of possible indicators of shamanic activity, and applying it to a range of evidence drawn from a wide area, which could all be explained in other ways. The same unease regarding methodology attaches for me to her work on Druids, in the recent *Caesar's Druids* and the earlier *Exploring the World of the Druids*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1998. I have, however, hinted at these differences above, and discussed them before in *Blood and Mistletoe*, 412–16, and my concern here is to celebrate the many aspects of her work which I find admirable and inspiring.

206. Good general surveys of paganism across the Continent are Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*, London, Routledge, 1995; and Kenneth Dowden, *European Paganism*, London, Routledge, 2000.

207. What follows is based on Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

208. It is much less certain that there were equivalent celebrations at the equinoxes to match those at the solstices: this is considered in my book above, and for the astronomical evidence, see Clive Ruggles, *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland*, London, Yale University Press, 1999, passim; his views are summarized in his 'Astronomy and Stonehenge', in Barry Cunliffe and Colin Renfrew (eds), *Science and Stonehenge*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, 203–29.

209. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, IV.152D. Sir Barry Cunliffe reminds me that the right side may also have possessed a powerful symbolic significance simply because most people are right-handed: pers. comm., 1 February 2012.

210. The texts are cited and analysed in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 18–21.

5 The Roman Impact: Temples, Statues and Inscriptions

1. The classic study of this phenomenon in the nineteenth century is Richard Hingley, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen*, London, Routledge, 2000; to which can be added Mark Bradley, 'Tacitus's "Agricola" and the Conquest of Britain', in Mark Bradley (ed.), *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, 123–57. I have made some contribution to its twentieth-century manifestation in 'The Post-Christian Arthur', *Arthurian*

Literature, 26 (2009), 149–70; and ‘Druids in Recent British Fiction’, in Marion Gibson *et al.* (eds), *Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Nationalism*, forthcoming from Routledge.

2. This pattern is examined in my pair of essays cited above.

3. Francis Pryor, *Britain BC*, London, HarperCollins, 2003, 429–39.

4. E.g. Stuart Laycock, *Britannia: The Failed State*, Stroud, Tempus, 2008; Miles Russell and Stuart Laycock, *UnRoman Britain*, Stroud, History Press, 2010; and Neil Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*, Stroud, Tempus, 2000.

5. J. D. Hill, ‘Romanization, Gender and Class’, in Simon James and Martin Millett (eds), *Britons and Romans*, London, Council for British Archaeology, 2001, 12–18; John Creighton, *Britannia*, London, Routledge, 2006, passim; David Mattingley, *An Imperial Possession*, London, Allen Lane, 2006, 520–8; Many of these ideas were presaged in Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 1–8.

6. Simon James, ‘Soldiers and Civilians’, in James and Millett (eds), *Britons and Romans*, 77–89.

7. Guy de la Bédoyère, *Eagles over Britannia*, Stroud, Tempus, 2001, 11–19.

8. Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, 65–180; Edward James, *Britain in the First Millennium*, London, Arnold, 2001, 22–56; Petra Dark, *The Environment of Britain in the First Millennium*, London, Duckworth, 2000, 128–9; Timothy Darvill, *Prehistoric Britain*, London, 2nd edition, Routledge, 2010, 331–2; David Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005, 153–4; Mattingley, *An Imperial Possession*, 520–8; Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, London, Allen Lane, 2010, 1–6.

9. Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, 6–17; Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, 125–211; Mattingley, *An Imperial Possession*, 1–213, 316–519.

10. The account of it that follows is based on H. J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion*, London, 1948; Mary Beard *et al.*, *Religions of Rome: Volume One*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2003; Clifford Ando (ed.), *Roman Religion*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2003; Valerie M. Warrior, *Roman Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006; Jörg Rupke, *Religion of the Romans*, trans. and ed. Richard Gordon, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007; Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008.

11. Again, easy overviews are provided by Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*, London, Routledge, 1995; and Ken Dowden, *European Paganism*, London, Routledge, 2000.

12. Guy de la Bédoyère, *Gods with Thunderbolts*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 32–9.

13. Guy de la Bédoyère, *Roman Britain*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2006, 228–32; quotation on p. 229; see also Simon Esmonde Cleary, 'Roman Britain', in John Hunter and Ian Ralston (eds), *The Archaeology of Britain*, London, Routledge, 2nd edition, 2009, 212–15.

14. Miranda (Aldhouse-) Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, Gloucester, Sutton, 1986; Graham Webster, *The British Celts and their Gods under Rome*, London, Batsford, 1986; Guy de la Bédoyère, *English Heritage Book of Roman Villas and the Countryside*, London, Batsford, 1993, 102; Martin Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, London, Batsford, 1984; Joan P. Alcock, 'The Concept of Genius in Roman Britain', in Martin Henig and Anthony King (eds), *Pagan Gods and Shrines of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1986, 113–34.

15. Miranda (Aldhouse-) Green, *The Religions of Civilian Roman Britain*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1976, 67–71; Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, chs 4–5; Ann Woodward, *English Heritage Book of Shrines and Sacrifice*, London, Batsford, 1992, 58; J. Bagnall Smith, 'Votive Objects and Objects of Votive Significance from Great Walsingham, Norfolk', *Britannia*, 30 (1999), 21–56; Christopher J. Arnold and Jeffrey L. Davies, *Roman and Early Medieval Wales*, Stroud, Sutton, 2000, 127–8.

16. Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, ch. 4; David Rudling, 'Roman-Period Temples, Shrines and Religion in Sussex', in David Rudling (ed.), *Ritual Landscapes of Roman Southeast Britain*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2008, 95–137.

17. For what follows, see Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, 97–109, updated by Matthew Symonds, 'New Light on Mithraic Scotland', *Current Archaeology*, 256 (2011), 6; John Shepherd, *The Temple of Mithras, London*, London, English Heritage, 1998; and Roger Ling, 'Mosaics in Roman Britain', *Britannia*, 28 (1997), 275.

18. Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, 136–7.

19. Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, ch. 3; and *Celtic Goddesses*, London, British Museum, 1995, 106–11; Webster, *The British Celts and their Gods under Rome*, 63–6. The basic study remains F. Haverfield, 'The Mother Goddesses', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 15 (1892), 314–36.

20. Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, 87–91; Webster, *The British Celts and their Gods under Rome*, 66–70.

21. Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, 95–7; Webster, *The British Celts and their Gods under Rome*, 59–60. It should be noted that no British relief of this goddess actually identifies her as Rosmerta, though her iconography, and pairing with Mercury, is the same as the Gaulish deity of that name. Stephen Yeates has suggested that she was a native goddess of the Dobunni with similar attributes: *Religion, Community and Territories*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2006, 87. Her icons are in the City Museum, Gloucester, the Corinium Museum at Cirencester, and the Roman Baths Museum at Bath.

22. Discussed in Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, 94–5; the Museum of London has some especially fine specimens, but they are also found in a number of provincial collections, such as those of the Verulamium Museum at St Albans and the Corinium Museum, Cirencester.

23. Adam Daubney, 'Lord of the Rings', *Current Archaeology*, 254 (2011), 36–9.

24. Proinsias MacCana, *Celtic Mythology*, London, Hamlyn, 1970, 32.

25. Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, 95.

26. The classic modern study in English is Phyllis Fray Bober, 'Cernunnos', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 55 (1951), 13–51.

27. These doubts were summed up by F. Le Roux, 'Cernunnos', *Ogam*, 25 (1953), 324–9.

28. Margaret Murray, *The God of the Witches*, 1931: I have used the Oxford University Press reprint of 1970, where Cernunnos is discussed on p. 29.

29. It is in the Corinium Museum at Cirencester.

30. The classic catalogue of material relating to her is René Magnen and Émile Thevenot, *Épona*, Bordeaux, Delmas, 1956; for updates, see Claude Sterckx, *Élements de cosmogonie celtique*, Brussels, University of Brussels, 1986, 9–54; and Katherine M. Lindoff, 'Epona: A Celt Among the Romans', *Latomus*, 38 (1979), 817–37.

31. *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, ed. R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1965, nos 1777 and 2177; Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain*, London, Sphere Books reprint, 1974, 286–7; M. R. Hull, 'An Epona Sculpture in the Colchester and Essex Museum', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 19 (1930), 198–9; Martin Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester, 1971', *Antiquaries' Journal*, 55 (1977), 299 and 335–6.

32. Webster, *The British Celts and their Gods under Rome*, 55, 73–9; See also Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, 103–9; and Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, 47–8. The statue of the Tyne god is in the museum kept by English Heritage at the Chesters Roman fort.

33. Green *The Gods of the Celts*, 148–50.

34. Ibid., 103–9.

35. The figures concerned are kept, respectively, in the Newport, Corinium and Gloucester Museums, and that maintained by the National Trust at Chedworth Roman Villa.

36. It was Anne Ross who first comprehensively drew attention to this category of deity in Britain: *Pagan Celtic Britain*, 172–220.

37. Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, LXII.1–7.

38. Jane Webster, 'Interpretatio', *Britannia*, 26 (1995), 153–62; 'Translation and Subjection', in J. D. Hill and C. G. Cumberpatch (eds), *Different Iron Ages*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1995, 175–83; and 'Necessary Comparisons', *World Archaeology*, 28 (1997), 324–37; Amy L. Zoll, 'Patterns of Worship in Roman Britain', in Sally Cottam *et al.* (eds), *TRAC 94*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1994, 32–40; and see Mattingley, *An Imperial Possession*, 214–19.

39. Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, ch. 2, collated the evidence.

40. Edward James, *Britain in the First Millennium*, London, Arnold, 2001, 68; Green, *Celtic Goddesses*, 99–102; Lindsay Allason-Jones, 'Coventina's Well', in Sandra Billington and Miranda Green (eds), *The Concept of the Goddess*, London, Routledge, 1996, 107–19.

41. The inscriptions are cited, with full source references, in Ronald Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 61 (2011), 57–85.

42. Jane Webster has gone so far as to assert that Brigantia was the creation of a single emperor who visited Britain in the early third century, Septimius Severus: see her 'Translation and Subjection', 182–3.

43. De la Bédoyère, *Gods with Thunderbolts*, 69–71.

44. Warwick Rodwell (ed.), *Temples, Churches and Religion: Recent Research in Roman Britain*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1980; updated by David Bird, *Roman Surrey*, Stroud, Tempus, 2004, 147–51. Hallaton in Leicestershire is an example of an Iron Age shrine which was abandoned when the Romans arrived, but the site of this open-air sanctuary continued to receive deposits of metalwork until near the end of imperial rule: Frank Hargrave, 'The Hallaton Treasure', *Current Archaeology*, 236 (2009), 36–41.

45. The finds from which are kept in the museum maintained by English Heritage on the site.

46. W. J. Wedlake, *Excavations of the Shrine of Apollo at Nettleton, Wiltshire*, London, Society of Antiquaries, 1982.

47. Ann Woodward, *The Uley Shrines*, London, English Heritage, 1993.

48. Collingwood and Wright (eds), *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, nos 616 and 617.

49. R. E. M. Wheeler and T. V. Wheeler, *Report on the Excavation of the Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman Site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire*, Oxford, 1932.

50. Roger Leech, 'Religion and Burials in South Somerset and North Dorset', in Rodwell (ed.), *Temples, Churches and Religion*, 332–3.

51. De la Bédoyère, *Gods with Thunderbolts*, 124.

52. The items are listed, and the attributions made, in Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, 130–42; see also Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Caesar's Druids*, London, Yale University Press, 2010, 154–65; and Bird, *Roman Surrey*, 164–7.

53. Christopher J. Arnold and Jeffrey L. Davies, *Roman and Early Medieval Wales*, Stroud, Sutton, 2000, 126; Chris Catling, 'The Riddle of the Lake', *Current Archaeology*, 273 (2012), 26–33.

54. Ralph Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Religion and Magic*, London, Batsford, 1987, 26–30.

55. Philippa Walton, 'Roman Votives from the Water of the Tees', *Current Archaeology*, 221 (2008), 36–41.

56. The original excavation report is in *Abstracts of the Proceedings of the Ashmolean Society*, 2 (1843–53), 55.

57. 'By the Rev. C. R. Manning', *Archaeological Journal*, 32 (1875), 108–9, and 46 (1889), 352.

58. Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, XXII.2

59. Lindsay Allason-Jones and Bruce McKay, *Coventina's Well*, Chesters, Trustees of the Clayton Collection, 1985; Allason-Jones, 'Coventina's Well'.

60. Walton, 'Roman Votives from the Water of the Tees'.

61. Data collected by Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 45–8.

62. The great pioneering work into these, which established their nature and importance, was Anne Ross, ‘Shafts, Pits, Wells’, in J. M. Coles and D. D. A. Simpson (eds), *Studies in Ancient Europe*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1968, 255–85.

63. There is a general survey of the evidence here by Ernest Black, ‘Pagan Religion in Rural South-East Britain’, in Rudling (ed.), *Ritual Landscapes of Roman Southeast Britain*, 1–26.

64. Anthony King, ‘Animal Remains from Temples in Roman Britain’, *Britannia*, 34 (2005), 329–69.

65. Maria Medlycott, *The Roman Town of Great Chesterford*, Norwich, East Anglian Archaeology, 2011.

66. Michael Fulford, ‘Links with the Past’, *Britannia*, 32 (2001), 199–218.

67. Bryn Walters, ‘Roman Villas in Britain’, *Current Archaeology*, 229 (2009), 30–5.

68. Eleanor Scott, ‘Animal and Infant Burials in Romano-British Villas’, in Paul Garwood *et al.* (eds), *Sacred and Profane*, Oxford, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monographs, 1991, 115–21.

69. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 37–44.

70. De la Bédoyère, *Gods with Thunderbolts*, 39–42.

71. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 32.

72. Martin Millett, ‘Treasure: Interpreting Roman Hoards’, in Sally Cottam *et al.* (eds), *TRAC 94*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1994, 99–106; H. E. M. Cool, ‘The Significance of Snake Jewellery Hoards’, *Britannia*, 31 (2000), 29–40; Christopher Catling, ‘Britain’s Biggest Ever Coin Hoard’, *Salon*, 237 (12 July 2010), n.p.; Mike Pitts, ‘Frome Hoard May Have Been Sacrifice – and Not Alone’, *British Archaeology*, 114 (2010), 9; Sam Moorhead *et al.*, ‘Hoarding in Roman Britain’, *Current Archaeology*, 218 (2010), 12–15.

73. E.g. Catherine Johns *et al.*, *The Hoxne Late Roman Treasure*, London, British Museum Press, 2010.

74. Mike Pitts, ‘Coin Hoard Raises Questions about Roman Hoards’, *British Archaeology*, 122 (2012), 6.

75. M. W. C. Hassall and R. S. O. Tomlin, ‘Roman Britain in 1983: Inscriptions’, *Britannia*, 15 (1984), 337.

76. Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, 179–89; De la Bédoyère, *Gods with Thunderbolts*, 127–9.

77. Cool, 'The Significance of Snake Jewellery Hoards', made the point about the iconic significance of money. See also the case of Piercebridge, pp.253, 255 above.

78. Webster, *British Celts and their Gods*, 43–51, 83–98; Anthony Weir and James Jerman, *Images of Lust*, London, Batsford, 1986, 145–6.

79. Collingwood and Wright, *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, no. 1041.

80. Ibid., no. 1329.

81. Ibid., no. 1791.

82. L. J. F. Keppie, 'Roman Inscriptions from Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 113 (1983), 401.

83. Webster, *British Celts and their Gods*, 54.

84. R. S. O. Tomlin, 'The Curse Tablets', in Barry Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath. Volume Two*, Oxford, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988, 150.

85. Anne Ellison, 'Natives, Romans and Christians on West Hill, Uley', in Rodwell (ed.), *Temples, Churches and Religion*, 327. For the list of sites which had produced curse tablets up to 2006, see Mattingley, *An Imperial Possession*, 458–9.

86. Alison Taylor, *Burial Practice in Early England*, Stroud, Tempus, 2001, 118–20.

87. Roger Leech, 'Religion and Burials in South Somerset and North Dorset', in Rodwell (ed.), *Temples, Churches and Religion*, 337–52; E. W. Black, 'Romano-British Burial Customs and Religious Beliefs in South-East England', *Archaeological Journal*, 143 (1986), 203–32; Ann Woodward, *English Heritage Book of Shrines and Sacrifice*, 89–91; Rosalind Niblett, *The Excavation of a Ceremonial Site at Folly Lane, Verulamium*, London, Society for Roman Studies, 1999; Philip Crummy *et al.*, *Stanway*, London, Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 2007; Taylor, *Burial Practice in Early England*, 97–101.

88. Simon Esmonde Cleary, 'Putting the Dead in their Place', in John Pearle *et al.* (eds), *Burial, Society and Context in the Roman World*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2000, 127–42.

89. Jacqueline I. McKinley, 'Phoenix Rising', in ibid., 38–43.

90. Alison Taylor suggests that the spread of inhumation roughly matches that of the mystery religions, which tended to favour preservation of the body: *Burial Practice in Early England*, 110–

13.

91. Ibid., 118–20.

92. Joan P. Alcock, ‘Classical Religious Belief and Burial Practice in Roman Britain’, *Archaeological Journal*, 137 (1980), 50–6; Bruno Barber and David Bowsher, *The Eastern Cemetery of Roman London*, London, Museum of London, 2000; Hilary Cool, ‘Pyromania’, *British Archaeology*, 80 (2005), 12–19; Elizabeth O’Brien, *Post Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Burial Practices Reviewed*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1999.

93. Alcock, ‘Classical Religious Belief and Burial Practice in Roman Britain’, 56–62; Leech, ‘Religion and Burials’, 337–49; Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 65–70; Jake Weekes, ‘Classification and Analysis of the Archaeological Contexts for the Reconstruction of Early Romano-British Cremation Funerals’, *Britannia*, 39 (2008), 145–60; A. P. Fitzpatrick *et al.*, *Archaeological Investigations on the Route of the A27 Westhampnett Bypass, West Sussex, 1992*, Salisbury, Wessex Archaeology, 1997, 242–86; Sonia Puttock, *Ritual Significance of Personal Ornament in Roman Britain*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2002.

94. Black, ‘Romano-British Burial Customs’, 210–11.

95. Ibid., 225–7.

96. M. Harman *et al.*, ‘Burials, Bodies and Beheadings in Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries’, *Bulletin of the British Museum of Natural History (Geology)*, 35 (1981), 145–88; Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 71–5; Alison Taylor, ‘Aspects of Deviant Burial in Britain’, in Eileen M. Murphy (ed.), *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2008, 91–114.

97. Harman *et al.*, ‘Burials, Bodies and Beheadings’; Caroline Arcini, ‘Buried Face Down’, *Current Archaeology*, 231 (2009), 30–5; Taylor, ‘Aspects of Deviant Burial in Britain’.

98. Miranda (Aldhouse-) Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1998, 98–9.

99. Black, ‘Romano-British Burial Customs’, 225–7.

100. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 67.

101. Ibid., 45–6, 52.

102. Ibid., 37–8, 51; Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, 131; R. M. J. Isserlin, ‘Thinking the Unthinkable’, in Karen Meadows *et al.* (eds), *TRAC 96*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1997, 91–100.

103. Miranda (Aldhouse-) Green, *Dying for the Gods*, Stroud, Tempus, 2001, 104–7; and *Caesar's Druids*, 76–80, 180–2; Isserlin, 'Thinking the Unthinkable'; Simon Mays and James Steele, 'A Mutilated Human Skull from Roman St Albans', *Antiquity*, 70 (1996), 155–61; Scott, 'Animal and Infant Burials in Romano-British Villas'.

104. (Aldhouse-) Green, *Dying for the Gods*; and *Caesar's Druids*; Isserlin, 'Thinking the Unthinkable'; Alison Taylor, 'Burial with the Romans', *British Archaeology*, 69 (2003), 14–19.

105. De la Bédoyère, *Gods with Thunderbolts*, 107.

106. N. B. Aitchison, 'Roman Wealth, Native Ritual', *World Archaeology*, 20 (1988), 270–83; K. R. Dark, 'Roman-Period Activity at Prehistoric Ritual Monuments in Britain and the Armorican Peninsula', in Eleanor Scott (ed.), *Theoretical Roman Archaeology First Conference Proceedings*, Aldershot, Avebury, 133–46.

107. Howard Williams, 'The Ancient Monument in Romano-British Ritual Practices', in Colin Forcey *et al.* (eds), *TRAC 97: Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1998, 71–86.

108. Richard Hingley, 'Esoteric Knowledge?', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 75 (2009), 143–65; Paul Robinson, 'Miniature Socketed Bronze Axes from Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 88 (1995), 60–8.

109. Ronald Hutton, 'Romano-British Reuse of Prehistoric Ritual Sites', *Britannia*, 42 (2011), 1–22.

110. Christopher Gosden and Gary Lock, 'Prehistoric Histories', *World Archaeology*, 30 (1998), 2–12.

6 The Conversion to Christianity: A Clash of Religions, A Blend of Religions

1. From the nineteenth century, the Latin word *paganus* was commonly believed to signify a country-dweller, and its application to a believer in the older deities to be a consequence of the period in which Christianity had claimed the cities and the old religions had been pushed into the literal backwoods. In 1986 Robin Lane Fox established that there was no solid evidence for this, and suggested that it had meant a civilian instead, one not enrolled in the army of Christ: *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century to the Conversion of Constantine*, London, Viking, 1986, 30–1. Four years later Pierre Chuvin pointed out that the term was used in a religious sense when most city-dwellers were still pagan, and after the usage for a civilian had died out. He proposed that as it derived, undoubtedly, from the word *pagus*, the

standard Roman local administrative unit, it signified simply a believer in the local and rooted faiths, in other words the old religions: *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1990, 7–9. This does not seem to have been challenged, and is the interpretation adopted here.

2. Again, this was long thought to signify the countryside, being derived from ‘heath’. It was coined, however, in Gothic, where there is no such matching word for a wild place, so the actual origins of ‘heathen’ seem to be lost: see the *Oxford English Dictionary* on this point.

3. I have retained the conventional honorific titles for Constantine and Theodosius because of their undoubted achievement in stabilizing and reuniting the empire after a period of acute disruption, in the latter’s case for the very last time. Likewise Pope Gregory the Great, in a succeeding period, deserves his title for being an outstanding leader and author. In none of these cases is their religious allegiance the determining factor here.

4. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984, 608–9; and ‘Roman Britain, a Failed Promise’, in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North*, York, York Medieval Press, 2003, 79–91; Martin Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain*, London, Batsford, 1984, 13–14; Dorothy Watts, *Christians and Pagans in Roman Britain*, London, Routledge, 1991; and *Religion in Late Roman Britain*, London, Routledge, 1998, passim; K. R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1994, 34; Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 195–6; Edward James, *Britain in the First Millennium*, London, Arnold, 2001, 78; Michelle P. Brown, *How Christianity Came to Britain*, Oxford, Lion, 2006, 46–7; Barbara Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, Harlow, Pearson Longman, 2006, 110; Neil Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain*, Stroud, Tempus, 2000, 120; David Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, Stroud, Tempus, 2003, 170–2; Malcolm Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, London, Yale University Press, 2010, 1–43; Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Christianity in England from Roman Times to the Reformation: Volume One*, London, SCM Press, 1999, 58–64.

5. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I.13; Gildas, *De excidio*, c. 10.

6. Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 1–5; Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 30–5.

7. Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 38, conducts a particularly careful analysis of the list.

8. Victricius, *De laude sanctorum*, I (edited in *Patrologia Latina* XX, 443–4).

9. Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 44–5.

10. A point emphasized by Guy de la Bédoyère, *Gods with Thunderbolts*, Stroud, Tempus, 2002, 215–16.

11. Susan Pearce, 'The Hinton St Mary Mosaic Pavement', *Britannia*, 39 (2008), 193–218; Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 107–15; Brown, *How Christianity Came to Britain*, 41–7.

12. Guy de la Bédoyère, *English Heritage Book of Roman Villas and the Countryside*, London, Batsford, 1993, 114–15; Roger Ling, 'Mosaics in Roman Britain', *Britannia*, 28 (1997), 278; Dominic Perring, 'Gnosticism in Fourth-Century Britain', *Britannia*, 34 (2003), 97–127; Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 10–43; Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 115.

13. Pete Wilson, *Lullingstone Roman Villa*, London, English Heritage, 2009, 6–10.

14. Watts, *Christians and Pagans*, 38–51.

15. Elizabeth O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Burial Practices Reviewed*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1999, passim; Alison Taylor, *Burial Practice in Early England*, Stroud, Tempus, 2001, 125–9; Ann Woodward, *English Heritage Book of Shrines and Sacrifice*, London, Batsford, 1992, 89–97; Bruno Barber and David Bowsher, *The Eastern Cemetery of Roman London*, London, Museum of London, 2000, esp. 322.

16. Watts, *Religion in Late Roman Britain*, 74–95.

17. See David Petts's careful reflections on the former point in *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 139–49; and Christopher Sparey-Green's restatement of the argument that the cemeteries of well-spaced, individual graves with few or no goods are a Christian, or Christian-inspired, phenomenon: 'Where Are the Christians?', in Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North*, 93–118.

18. Watts, *Christians and Pagans*, 99–145; Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 30–43; Martin Henig, '"And Did Those Feet in Ancient Times"', in David Rudling (ed.), *Ritual Landscapes of Roman Southeast Britain*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2008, 191–206; Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 56–65.

19. Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain* 118–27.

20. C. F. Mawer, *Evidence for Christianity in Roman Britain: The Small Finds*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1995.

21. Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 96–9.

22. Belinda Crerar, 'Contextualising Roman-British Lead Tanks', *Britannia*, 43 (2012), 131–66.

23. Philip Rahtz and Lorna Watts, ‘The End of Roman Temples in the West of Britain’, in P. J. Casey (ed.), *The End of Roman Britain*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1980, 183–201; Peter Salway, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Roman Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, 525–6; Guy de la Bédoyère, *The Golden Age of Roman Britain*, Stroud, Tempus, 1999, 99–109; Philip Rahtz, ‘150 Years of Somerset Archaeology’, in C. J. Webster (ed.), *Somerset Archaeology*, Taunton, Somerset County Council, 2000, 4; K. Hylson-Smith, *Christianity in England from Roman Times to the Reformation*, London, SCM Press, 1999, 61; Ann Woodward and Peter Leach, *The Uley Shrines*, London, English Heritage, 1993, passim; Alex Smith, ‘The Fate of Pagan Temples in South-East Britain during the Late and Post-Roman Period’, in David Rudling (ed.), *Ritual Landscapes of Roman Southeast Britain*, 171–90; Watts, *Religion in Late Roman Britain*, 18–73.

24. The most succinct recent summary of this process is in Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, London, Allen Lane, 2010, 22–9.

25. Lloyd Laing, ‘Segontium and the Post-Roman Occupation of Wales’, in Lloyd Laing (ed.), *Studies in Celtic Survival*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1977, 57–8; Salway, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Roman Britain*, 525.

26. Ralph Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, London, Batsford, 1987, 96–101; Barry Cunliffe, *The City of Bath*, Gloucester, Sutton, 1986, 25.

27. The lead tablets concerned are preserved in the Roman Baths Museum.

28. John Shepherd, *The Temple of Mithras, London*, London, English Heritage, 227–9.

29. Ben Croxford, ‘Iconoclasm in Roman Britain’, *Britannia*, 34 (2003), 81–95.

30. David Petts, ‘How Christian was Late Roman Britain?’, *Current Archaeology*, 204 (2006), 648–51.

31. My own reviews of the debate are published in Ronald Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, London, Hambledon and London, 2003, 39–58; and ‘The Early Arthur’, in Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 21–35.

32. See for example Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*, 32–63; Christopher A. Snyder, *An Age of Tyrants*, Stroud, Sutton, 1998, 235–6.

33. Wendy Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1982, 168; Yorke, *Conversion of Britain*, 28. The earliest Life to deal with a British saint of this

period is usually considered to be that of Samson of Dol, which is sometimes used uncritically as an account of a conditions in Wales and Cornwall during the sixth century: the most recent author to do so is Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 94–6. It was, however, probably written in Brittany one or two hundred years later: Yorke, *Conversion of Britain*, 11–14.

34. Constantius, *Vita sancti Germani*, c. 14–17.

35. Prosper and Constantius are compared by E. A Thompson, *Saint Germanus of Auxerre and the End of Roman Britain*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1984, 1–13, who on pp. 15–25 makes the point about the mass baptism being most probably of people already Christian.

36. Patrick, *Confessio*, esp. c. 1, 27, 32 and *Epistola*. For interpretations (along the lines suggested here), see Yorke, *Conversion of Britain*, 111; and Petts, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, 44–5. David Dumville *et al.*, *St Patrick*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1993, agreed that a later fifth-century date for the saint is the most likely.

37. Gildas, *De excidio Britonum*, esp. IV.2.

38. All points made by Thompson, *Saint Germanus*, 15–25, though he makes a general assumption that the Romano-British countryside had to be more pagan than the towns, which subsequent archaeology has called into question, as noted above.

39. *Historia Brittonum*, c. 56. Since the Second World War, however, writers of novels have manifested a new preoccupation with Arthur as the ruler of a Britain still deeply divided between pagan and Christian, in a long succession of works which provide fascinating insights into the religious cultures of modern Britain and America: see Ronald Hutton, 'The Post-Christian Arthur', *Arthurian Literature*, 26 (2009), 149–70.

40. Source as in n. 23

41. James Gerrard, 'The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath and the End of Roman Britain', *Antiquaries' Journal*, 87 (2007), 148–64.

42. Woodward and Leach, *The Uley Shrines*, 71.

43. I summarized what is known of the conversion of the Irish in *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, 262–3.

44. James E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 36–8, 71; Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 103–9; T. O. Clancy, 'The Real St Ninian', *Innes Review*, 22 (2001), 1–28; Edwina Proudfoot, 'The Hollow Hill and the Origins of Christianity in Eastern Scotland', in Barbara E. Crawford (ed.), *Conversion and Christianity in the North Sea*

World, St Andrews, Committee for Dark Age Studies, 1998, 57–73; Ian Smith, 'The Archaeology of the Early Christian Church in Scotland and Man AD 400–1200', in John Blair and Carol Pyrah (eds), *Church Archaeology*, York, Council for British Archaeology, 1996, 19–36.

45. P. H. Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, Stroud, Sutton, 1997; and 'Whithorn, Latinus and the Origins of Christianity in Scotland', in Helena Hamerow and Arthur MacGregor (eds), *Image and Power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2001, 23–32. The archaeology of early Christian sites along the Forth–Clyde line provides a frustratingly imprecise chronology for the conversion period. Textual evidence makes it likely that the local rulers along the Clyde were Christian by the 560s, but the earliest properly datable religious site there is from the early seventh century: Christopher Lowe, *Inchmarnock*, Edinburgh, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2008. An equivalent monastic site on the Isle of May at the mouth of the Firth of Forth commences, in terms of detectable remains, with a cemetery which could have been inaugurated at any point between the fifth and the eighth centuries: Heather F. James and Peter Yeoman, *Excavations at St Ethernan's Monastery, Isle of May, Fife, 1992–7*, Perth, Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee, 2008.

46. It was long presumed that Argyll was settled from Ireland in the post-Roman period because three early medieval texts said specifically that it was, and because of the close linguistic, social and political links between the two. Ewan Campbell, 'Were the Scots Irish?', *Antiquity*, 75 (2001), 285–92, pointed out, however, that the two areas were completely different in the form both of their settlements and their ornaments, and there was no trace of a British linguistic substratum to Argyll place names; while the texts concerned dated from the eighth to the tenth centuries and probably reflected the political ambitions of the time, rather than any historical reality.

47. Alfred Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, London, Arnold, 1984, 57–72; W. D. H. Sellar, 'Warlords, Holy Men and Matrilineal Succession', *Innes Review*, 36 (1985), 41; Stephen T. Driscoll, 'Picts and Prehistory', *World Archaeology*, 30 (1998), 142–58; Martin Carver, *Portmahomack*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2008, 94; and 'Lost, Found, Repossessed or Argued Away – the Case of the Picts', *Antiquity*, 85 (2011), 1165–83; Meggen Gondek, 'Pictish Symbol Stones: Caught between Prehistory and History', in Aron Mazel *et al.* (eds), *Art as Metaphor*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2007, 69–89; George and Isabel Henderson, *The Art of the Picts*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 2004, 168–72. The development of Pictish identity is the main theme of Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*.

48. Leslie Alcock, *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests in Northern Britain, AD 550–850*, Edinburgh, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2003, 371–6.

49. Henderson and Henderson, *The Art of the Picts*, 168–72. Martin Carver also tells me of the discovery of a site at Rhynie in 2012, where nine Pictish symbol stones seem to be associated with a cult centre which included animal sacrifice, and was therefore pagan: pers. comm., 19 October 2012.

50. The best recent account is in Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 94–115; see also Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 149–63; and Douglas MacLean, 'Maelrubai, Applecross and the Late Pictish Contribution West of Druimalban', in *The Worm, the Germ and the Thorn*, Balgavies, Pinkfoot, 1997, 173–87.

51. Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 161–2.

52. See Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 343–4, for the most recent consideration of the problem.

53. Carver, *Portmahomack*, esp. p. 68.

54. Anna Ritchie, 'Paganism among the Picts and the Conversion of Orkney', in Jane Downes and Anna Ritchie (eds), *Sea Change: Orkney and Northern Europe in the Later Iron Age AD 300–800*, Blagavies, Pinkfoot Press, 2003, 3–10.

55. For a recent example of this exercise, by a distinguished historian, see Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*.

56. These are the three modes of Christian administration defined by Martin Carver, especially in 'Why There? Why That? Why Then? The Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality', in Hamerow and MacGregor (eds), *Image and Power*, 1–22.

57. A point emphasized by Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 375–9.

58. See especially Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Settlement of England in Bede and the Chronicle', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 12 (1983), 1–41; and Barbara Yorke, 'Fact or Fiction?', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 6 (1993), 45–51.

59. A story well told by Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, Stroud, Sutton, 2000, 110–13.

60. Ibid., 163–5; N. J. Higham, *The English Conquest*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994, 1–2.

61. These developments are well summarized in Nicholas Higham, *Britain and the Anglo-Saxons*, London, Seaby, 1992, 1–14. For a detailed and triumphant listing of them, see Francis Pryor, *Britain AD*, London, HarperCollins, 2004.

62. Brian Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, London, Bantam, 2006, 267–88; Stephen Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, London, Constable and Robinson, 2006, 367–82.

63. The development of this interpretation is traced by Helena Hamerow, 'Migration Theory and the Anglo-Saxon "Identity Crisis"', in John Chapman and Helena Hamerow (eds), *Migrations and Invasions in Archaeological Explanation*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1997, 33–44; and Nicholas Higham, 'Introduction', in N. J. Higham (ed.), *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2007, 9–15.

64. The sources for this are in Hamerow and Higham, in the previous note; see also Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, 39–60.

65. See especially Sam Lucy's many publications, above all 'The Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite', in Martin Rundkvist (ed.), *Grave Matters*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1999, 33–40; and *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*.

66. The arguments in this paragraph are summarized in Helena Hamerow, 'Migration Theory and the Anglo-Saxon "Identity Crisis"'; and 'Migration Theory and the Migration Period', in Blaise Viner (ed.), *Building on the Past*, London, Royal Archaeological Institute, 1994, 164–77; Catherine Hills, 'Spong Hill and the Adventus Saxonum', in Catherine E. Karkov *et al.* (eds), *Spaces of the Living and the Dead*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1999, 15–26; 'Who Were the East Anglians?' in Julie Gardiner (ed.), *Flatlands and Wetlands*, Norwich, Scole Archaeological Committee for East Anglia, 1993, 14–23; and *Origins of the English*, London, Duckworth, 2003; Sally Crawford, 'Britons, Anglo-Saxons and the Germanic Burial Ritual', in Chapman and Hamerow (eds), *Migrations and Invasions*, 45–72; John T. Baker, *Cultural Transition in the Chilterns and Essex Region, 350 AD to 650 AD*, Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2006; Don Henson, *The Origins of the Anglo-Saxons*, Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Anglo-Saxon Books, 2006; Higham (ed.), *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, passim; and Heinrich Härke, 'Kings and Warriors', in Paul Slack and Ryk Ward (eds), *The Peopling of Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 146–52. These authors find different solutions to the problem posed by the evidence; as is indeed the point of the following paragraph.

67. The great exceptions are in Warwickshire, far west of what ought to have been the initial area of Anglo-Saxon settlement, at Stretton on the Fosse, and (much more famously) Wasperton: see Martin Carver *et al.*, *Wasperton*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2009.

68. The cultural discontinuity is apparent even in the rare and celebrated cases where continuity is seemingly present between Briton and Anglo-Saxon in the same settlement, as at West Heslerton in Yorkshire and Dorchester in Oxfordshire: Philip Rahtz, 'West Heslerton

Seminar', *Antiquity*, 75 (2001), 305–8; and C. M. Hills and T. C. O'Connell, 'New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession', *Antiquity*, 83 (2009), 1096–108.

69. See for example, Eddius Stephanus, *Vita sancti Wilfrithi*, c. 17.

70. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, 404.

71. Higham, *The English Conquest*, 2.

72. This, and a few more of the summary reflections below were presaged in my 'Afterword' to Carver *et al.* (eds), *Signals of Belief in Early England*, 201–6.

73. This traditional compendium is compiled from proportionately traditional books: Brian Branston, *The Lost Gods of England*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1957, chs 6–8; Gale R. Owen, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons*, Newton Abbot, Barnes and Noble, 1981, 24–37; David Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, London, Routledge, 1992, ch. 1. More recently Richard North has found further possible references to obscure deities and details of the worship of those known, by conflating what he himself honestly terms 'a far-flung variety of sources': *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997: quotation on p. 78. To me he makes many fascinating suggestions, but the linkages involved are a little too daring for certainty.

74. Points made by C. J. Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, London, Routledge, 2nd edition, 1997, 151–2.

75. Audrey Meaney, 'Pagan English Sanctuaries, Place Names and Hundred Meetings Places', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 8 (1995), 29–42; Hilda Ellis Davidson, *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe*, London, Routledge, 1993, 57.

76. Kris Kershaw, *The One-Eyed God*, Washington, DC, Journal of Indo-European Studies, 2000, 1–9.

77. R. I. Page, 'Anglo-Saxon Paganism', in T. Hofstra *et al.* (eds), *Pagans and Christians*, Groningen, Egbert Forsten, 1995, 125–6. The earlier historiography of the issue is discussed by Venetia Newall, *An Egg at Easter*, London, Routledge, 1971, 384–6. More recent contributions include Alby Stone, 'Eostre', *Talking Stick*, 10 (1993), 1–2, and the review of the debate by Carole Cusack, 'The Goddess Eostre', *Pomegranate*, 9 (2007), 22–9. Hretha is an odd name for an Anglo-Saxon goddess, as the feminine ending in the language is not 'a' but 'e': Audrey Meaney, 'Bede and Anglo-Saxon Paganism', *Parergon*, NS 3 (1985), 7. Meaney was one of the most distinguished of the scholars to argue that Bede's information on Anglo-Saxon paganism should be trusted throughout, and to characterize the only possible other position as one of suggesting that he invented it. This is not necessarily the case. My own stance is to acknowledge that he believed that he had good reason to derive the names of the months from goddesses, but that since we do not know what that reason was, we cannot evaluate its worth.

78. For example in Jens David Baumbach's study of the growth of the worship of the goddess Hera in Archaic Greece, from different local cults: *The Significance of Votive Offerings in Selected Hera Sanctuaries in the Peloponnese, Ionia and Western Greece*, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2004.

79. The poetry in *Kormák's Saga* alone, for example, contains the names of ten goddesses and two gods who are not in the familiar pantheon, but are usually taken by editors to be 'kennings' for those who are.

80. The bulk of what follows in this paragraph is based on Branston, *Lost Gods*, 31–3; Owen, *Rites and Religions*, 41–5; Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, chs 1–2; and Meaney, 'Pagan English Sanctuaries, Place Names and Hundred Meetings Places'.

81. Sarah Semple, 'Defining the OE *Hearg*', *Early Medieval Europe*, 15 (2007), 364–85.

82. See the comment by John Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines and their Prototypes', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 8 (1995), 1.

83. Ibid., 1–28.

84. Sarah Semple, ‘In the Open Air’, in Carver *et al.* (eds), *Signals of Belief*, 24–33.

85. Suggested by John Hines, ‘Religion’, in John Hines (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1997, 385.

86. On which see Brian Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering*, London, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1977, 91–332; John Blair, ‘Churches in the Early English Landscape’, in Blair and Pyrah (eds), *Church Archaeology*, 8, and Blair, ‘Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines’.

87. A point made by Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, London, Dent, 1989, 59.

88. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, II.13, 15.

89. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (eds), *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, Ipswich, Brewer, 1979, 160–1.

90. It may be noted that, over half a millennium before, Tacitus had spoken of the German tribes – including those with whom his fellow Romans had come into direct contact – as having priests: *Germania*, VII, IX, XI, XLIII.

91. Eddius Stephanus, *Vita sancti Wilfrithi*, c. 13.

92. Bertram Colgrave (ed.), *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968, c. 15.

93. Most of this paragraph is based on Branston, *Lost Gods*, ch. 4; and Owen, *Rites and Religions*, 50–60.

94. Meaney, ‘Bede and Anglo-Saxon Paganism’, 19–21.

95. A. L. Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1981, 249–62; Helen Geake, ‘The Control of Burial Practice in Anglo-Saxon England’, in Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North*, 259–69.

96. *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, c. 16.

97. The most relevant comparisons for this specific case are assembled by Meaney, ‘Bede and Anglo-Saxon Paganism’, 23–4.

98. North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, 333–4.

99. S. D. Church, ‘Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England’, *History*, 93 (2008), 161–210.

100. D. H. Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 13–20.

101. A selection includes B. J. Timmer, 'Wyrd in Anglo-Saxon Prose and Poetry', *Neophil*, 26 (1940–1), 24–33; G. W. Weber, *Wyrd*, Frankfurt, Frankfurter Beiträge zur Germanistik, 1969; and E. G. Stanley, *The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, 92–121.

102. Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 15.

103. Page, 'Anglo-Saxon Paganism', 124, following Bosworth-Toller's standard dictionary.

104. On this in a British context, with some comparisons abroad, see Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996. Meaney, 'Bede and Anglo-Saxon Paganism', 5–6, finds in the 'Mothers' of the Mothers' Night the Matres of the Roman Rhineland, which is entirely possible, if Bede got the derivation of the name right.

105. On this consensus, see J. G. Ogilvy and Donald Baker, *Reading Beowulf*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, 180–1; and Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf*, Woodbridge, Brewer, 2003, 130–7.

106. All this is my own reading of the work, but fits the consensus in the publications listed below.

107. For comparisons, see Lewis E. Nicolson (ed.), *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, Notre Dame, University of Indiana Press, 1963; Patrick Wormald, 'Bede, "Beowulf" and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in Robert T. Farrell (ed.), *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1978, 32–90; Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991; Roberta Frank, '"Beowulf" and Sutton Hoo', in Calvin B. Kendall and Peter S. Wells (eds), *Voyage to the Other World*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1992, 47–64; Fred C. Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993; Sam Newton, *The Origins of 'Beowulf' and the Pre-Viking Kingdom of East Anglia*, Cambridge, Brewer, 1993; James W. Earl, *Thinking about 'Beowulf'*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1994; Peter S. Baker (ed.), *Beowulf*, New York, Garland, 1995; C. E. Fell, 'Paganism in "Beowulf"', in T. Hofstra *et al.* (eds), *Pagans and Christians*, Groningen, Forsten, 1995, 9–34 Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (eds), *A Beowulf Handbook*, Exeter, Exeter University Press, 1997; Christina Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon*, Cambridge, Brewer, 2000; Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *The Four Funerals in 'Beowulf'*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000; Geoffrey Russom, 'At the Center of

“Beowulf”’, in Stephen O. Glosecki (ed.), *Myth in Early Northwest Europe*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007, 225–40.

108. In *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, New York, Garland, 1989. The shamanism hypothesis, with less close definition, hangs over a few of the essays in Carver *et al.* (eds), *Signals of Belief*, especially Alexandra Sanmark, ‘Living On’: pp. 158–80.

109. That is my reading, as expounded in *Shamans*, London, Hambledon and London, 2001, 129–49; and ‘The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt’, in Julian Goodare (ed.), *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002, 16–32. For different parallel views, which are still compatible with mine, see Neil Price, *The Viking Way*, Uppsala, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, 2002; and Clive Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2 vols, 2009.

110. R. I. Page, *Runes*, London, British Museum, 1987, esp. 11–12; Christine E. Fell, ‘Runes and Semantics’, in Alfred Bammesberger (ed.), *Old English Runes and their Continental Background*, Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1991, 195–229; C. J. Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, London, 2nd edition, Routledge, 1997, 151–3.

111. *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies, The Second Series*, ed. M. Godden, London, Early English Texts Society, 1979, 204.

112. Unless otherwise stated, the material in the following discussion of pagan Anglo-Saxon burials is based on Owen, *Rites and Religions*, 61–95; Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, chs 4–5; J. D. Richards, ‘Style and Symbol’, in Stephen D. Driscoll and Margaret R. Nieke (eds), *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1988, 145–61; Rosemary Cramp, ‘Northumbria’, ibid., 72–3; M. Harman *et al.* ‘Burials, Bodies and Beheadings in Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries’, *Bulletin of the British Museum of Natural History (Geology)*, 35 (1981), 145–88; Sally Crawford, ‘Children, Death and the Afterlife’, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 6 (1993), 83–91; Nick Stoodley, ‘From the Cradle to the Grave’, *World Archaeology*, 31 (2000), 456–72; Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 156–65; Heinrich Harke, ‘“Warrior Graves”?’, *Past and Present*, 126 (1990), 22–43; and ‘The Circulation of Weapons in Anglo-Saxon Society’, in Frans Theuws and Janet L. Nelson (eds), *Rituals of Power from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Leiden, Brill, 2000, 377–400; Martin Carver, ‘Reflections on the Meanings of Monumental Barrows in Anglo-Saxon England’, in Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (eds), *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*, London, Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2002, 132–43; Sarah Semple, ‘Politics and Princes AD 400–800’, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 27 (2008), 407–29;

Howard Williams, ‘At the Funeral’, in Carver *et al.* (eds), *Signals of Belief in Early England*, 67–82; Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009; Pam J. Crabtree, ‘The Symbolic Role of Animals in Anglo-Saxon England’, in Kathleen Ryan and Pam J. Crabtree (eds), *The Symbolic Role of Animals in Archaeology*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995, 20–6; Alison Taylor, *Burial Practice in Early England*, Stroud, Tempus, 2001, 135–61; Howard Williams, ‘Animals, Ashes and Ancestors’, in Aleksander Pluskowski (ed.), *Just Skin and Bones?*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2005, 19–40; *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006; and ‘Transforming Body and Soul’, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 14 (2007), 66–91; Chris Fern, ‘Early Anglo-Saxon Horse Burial of the Fifth to Seventh Centuries AD’, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*,14 (2007), 92–109; Sally Crawford, ‘Votive Deposition, Religion and the Anglo-Saxon Furnished Burial Ritual’, *World Archaeology*, 36 (2004), 82–102; Christina Lee, *Feasting the Dead*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2007; Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*.

113. A point demonstrated especially by J. D. Richards, *The Significance of Form and Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Cremation Urns*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1987.

114. The most famous case is that at Sewerby where the Yorkshire chalk wolds reach the coast, of an older, grossly contorted, woman put prone over the body of a younger one. Both, however, were given their own goods, and there is no proof that they were buried together or that the people who interred the upper body were aware of the lower. The contortion could have been produced by pre-burial trauma, such as death in a fire, or rigor mortis, or by the collapse of the coffin below; but then again, the woman might still possibly have been buried alive, as a criminal or sacrifice. For reviews of the debate over the case, see Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, 60–8; Williams, *Death and Memory*, 97–100; and Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, 78–9. In that debate, the original proponent of live burial, Susan Hirst, has hit back at critics of that interpretation by accusing them of wanting a ‘sanitized’ version of the past. Such a charge has sometimes been made against those who have questioned the identification of bodies from British prehistory as victims of human sacrifice, by proponents of that interpretation. Perhaps significantly, I myself do not know of a case in which those who question the hypothesis of sacrifice have accused those who are fond of it of the opposite impulse.

115. A point made most forcefully by Hilda Ellis Davidson, ‘Human Sacrifice in the Late Pagan Period in North-Western Europe’, in M. O. H. Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1994, 331–4. See also Marilyn Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons*, London, Continuum, 2009, 73–4.

116. For the Snape cemetery, see William Filmer Sankey, ‘Snape’, *Current Archaeology*, 118 (1990), 348–52; for Sutton Hoo, below.

117. A point stressed repeatedly by Martin Carver, especially in ‘Boat Burial in Britain’, in Ole Crumlin Pederson and B. Munch Thye (eds), *The Ship and Symbol in Prehistoric and Medieval Scandinavia*, Copenhagen, National Museum of Denmark, 1995, 111–24. As he notes, a third cemetery of boat burials seems to have existed at Caister-on-Sea, also in East Anglia, where clench-nails of the kind used in boats were found in twelve graves.

118. Most of this story is in Steven J. Plunkett, *Sutton Hoo*, London, National Trust, 2002, 1–8; and Martin Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, London, British Museum, 1998, 1–14; I have added a few details from the testimony of elderly residents of Sutton and Tranmere during my visits in 1969 and 2010.

119. Martin Carver, *Sutton Hoo*, London, Society of Antiquaries, 2005; Frank, ‘“Beowulf” and Sutton Hoo’; Tom Williamson, *Sutton Hoo and its Landscape*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2008. Mike Parker Pearson has usefully reminded us that it is not absolutely certain that the elite buried at Sutton Hoo represented East Anglian royalty: but see Helen Geake’s reply, ‘Three Men and a (Leaky) Boat’, *British Archaeology* 112 (2010), 38–41.

120. Lisa Westcott, ‘Trophies of Kings’, *Current Archaeology*, 21 (2010), 30–5; Stephen Dean *et al.*, ‘The “Staffordshire Hoard”’, *Antiquaries’ Journal*, 90 (2010), 139–52; Leslie Webster, ‘The Staffordshire (Ogley) Hoard’, *Antiquity*, 85 (2011), 221–9; Martin Carver, ‘The Best We Can Do?’, ibid., 230–4.

121. John Hines, ‘Religion’, in John Hines (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1997, 380; Julie Lund, ‘At the Water’s Edge’, in Carver *et al.* (eds), *Signals of Belief*, 49–66.

122. The connection with Woden was made because the same figure is common on Swedish helmets of a roughly equivalent date where it has been identified (again not conclusively) as connected to the iconography of the Scandinavian Odin: Sonia Chadwick Hawkes *et al.* ‘The Finglesham Man’, *Antiquity*, 39 (1965), 17–32. Significantly, the recent publication of the excavation, S. Chadwick Hawkes *et al.* (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Finglesham, Kent*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, 21, 78–81, 263–6, avoids any such speculation, but a confident identification of the image with Woden still appears in some survey books on the period.

123. Chris Catling, ‘Finding Meaning in Anglo-Saxon Art’, *Current Archaeology*, 267 (2012), 31.

124. Tania Dickinson, ‘Symbols of Protection’, *Medieval Archaeology*, 49 (2005), 109–64.

125. Aleks Pluskowski, ‘Animal Magic’, and Chris Fern, ‘Horses in Mind’, in Carver *et al.* (eds), *Signals of Belief*, 103–57.

126. Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, c. 3, 9.

127. What follows is based essentially on Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, I–IV, reinforced by details from the saints’ Lives cited in notes above, and entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Extended recent retellings of the story, with differing emphases, may be found in Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 164–276; and Marilyn Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons c. 597 to c. 700*, London, Continuum, 2009, 48–56, 101–34.

128. John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, 10–34; Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 118–21.

129. This is the major theme of Carole M. Cusack, *Conversion among the Germanic Peoples*, London, Cassell, 1998.

130. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, I–IV. Nicholas Higham, *The Convert Kings*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, enumerated in detail the political benefits that kings obtained from Christianity, and the practical considerations which propelled the conversion of each kingdom. Damian Tyler provided a useful balance by pointing out that Christianity would have carried some disadvantages for rulers as well, in limitations on their freedom of action and alienation of land to churches, but these must have been outweighed by the advantages, or more would have rejected the new faith: ‘Reluctant Kings and Christian Conversion in Seventh-Century England, *History*, 92 (2007), 144–61.

131. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, II.5, 15, III.30.

132. Ibid., II.2, III.21, IV.13

133. Ibid., II.20, III.9, 18, 24, IV.13.

134. Ibid., I.32, III. 8.

135. For a good collection of work built around this concept, see Graham Harvey (ed.), *Indigenous Religions*, London, Cassell, 2000.

136. For which see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005.

137. For what follows in the next three paragraphs, see Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (eds), *Cultures in Contact*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000; D. M. Hadley, *The Vikings in England*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006, 28–80, 192–236; James Graham-Campbell *et al.* (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2001; Sarah Foot, 'Violence against Christians', *Medieval History*, 1 (1991), 3–16; Guy Halsall, 'Playing by Whose Rules?', *Medieval History*, 2 (1992), 1–12; Alfred P. Smyth, 'The Effect of Scandinavian Raiders on the English and Irish Churches', in Brendan Smith (ed.), *Britain and Ireland 900–1300*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 1–38; James H. Barrett, 'Christian and Pagan Practice during the Conversion of Viking Age Orkney and Shetland', in Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North*, 207–26.

138. James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batley, *Vikings in Scotland*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, 54–92, 143–54; Héléna Gray *et al.*, 'The Viking Buried at Swordle Bay', *Current Archaeology*, 265 (2012), 28–33.

139. Jacqui Watson, 'Hollow Swords and Needles in a Soil Block', *English Heritage Research News*, (January 2010), 14–16.

140. Julian Richards *et al.*, 'Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire', *Antiquaries' Journal*, 84 (2004), 23–116; Julian Richards, 'The Case of the Missing Vikings', in Lucy and Reynolds (eds), *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*, 156–70; D. M. Hadley, 'Burial Practices in Northern England during the Later Anglo-Saxon Period', ibid., 209–28; Hadley, *The Vikings in England*, 237–63; Martin Arnold, *The Vikings*, Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2007, 1–11; Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjolbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the "Great Heathen Army"', in Graham-Campbell *et al.* (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw*, 45–96; Julian Richards, 'Boundaries and Cult Centres', ibid., 97–104.

141. Marshall Cubbon, 'The Archaeology of the Vikings in the Isle of Man', in Christine Fell *et al.* (eds), *The Vikings in the Isle of Man*, London, Viking Society for Northern Research, 1983, 13–26; David M. Wilson, *The Vikings in the Isle of Man*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2008, 27–56; Neil S. Price, *The Viking Way*, Uppsala, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, 2002, 127–61. Further information on the burials, and Bersu, may be gained from the displays in the Manx National Museum.

142. What follows is taken from Julian D. Richards, *English Heritage Book of Viking Age England*, London, Batsford, 1991, ch. 11; Sue Margeson, 'On the Iconography of the Manx Crosses', in Fell *et al.* (eds), *The Vikings in the Isle of Man*, 95–106; Hadley, *The Vikings in*

England, 213–36; Richard N. Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1996, 80–94.

143. Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors*, 92.

144. Jön Staecker, 'Thor's Hammer', *Lund Archaeological Review*, 5 (1999), 89–104.

145. Barbara E. Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1987, 198.

146. Dorothy Whitelock *et al.* (eds), *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981, i.304–19, 409, 461–3, 489.

147. Lund, 'At the Water's Edge'.

148. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 107–8.

149. Gerhard Bersu and David M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves in the Isle of Man*, London, Society for Medieval Archaeology, 1966, 47–8; Arnold, *The Vikings*, 23–6; Davidson, 'Human Sacrifice in the Late Pagan Period'; Henrik Janson, 'Adam of Bremen and the Conversion of Scandinavia', in Ian N. Wood and Guyda Armstrong (eds), *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000, 88. Adam of Bremen's original account is in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, IV.26.

150. Roberta Frank, 'Viking Atrocity and Skaldic Verse', *English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), 332–43.

151. The debate took place in four articles published in the journal *Saga-Book* between 1986 and 1989. For differing reactions, see Halsall, 'Playing by Whose Rules?'; and Smyth, 'The Effect of Scandinavian Raiders'.

152. There is a good short summary of these, in a context directly related to the Christianization of early medieval northern Europe, in Cusack, *Conversion among the Germanic Peoples*, 1–29.

153. J. W. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, Cincinnati, Abingdon Press, 1933.

154. Milis, 'Introduction', and Martine de Reu, 'The Missionaries', in Milis (ed.), *The Pagan Middle Ages*, 1–10, 13–37.

155. Lesley Abrams, 'Conversion and Assimilation', in Hadley and Richards (eds), *Cultures in Contact*, 135–53.

156. Lesley Abrams, ‘The Conversion of the Danelaw’, in Graham-Campbell *et al.* (eds), *Vikings and the Danelaw*, 31–2.

157. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, I.29.

158. Walter Johnson, *Folk Memory*, Oxford, 1908; and *By-Ways in British Archaeology*, Cambridge, 1912.

159. Blair, ‘Churches in the Early English Landscape’, 12.

160. Derek Keene *et al.*, *St Pauls‘*, London, Yale University Press, 2004, 2–4.

161. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, 72–83.

162. Mark Gillings and Joshua Pollard, *Avebury*, London, Duckworth, 2004, 123–33.

163. Paul Ashbee, ‘The Medway Megaliths in Perspective’, *Archaeologia Cantiana,* 111 (1993), 63–5, believed that the Neolithic tomb-shrines of Kent were systematically wrecked in the thirteenth century as an act of religious desecration. He also, however, considered that the damage might have been the work of treasure hunters, against whose depredations laws were passed at that time; and this remains an alternative possibility.

164. Jeremy Harte, ‘Blót on the Landscape’, *Third Stone*, 34 (1999), 23–6.

165. Leslie Grinsell, ‘The Christianization of Prehistoric and Other Pagan Sites’, *Landscape History*, 8 (1986), 27–37.

166. Stephen James Yeates, *Religion, Community and Territory*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2006, 71.

167. Blair, ‘Churches in the Early English Landscape’, and Nancy Edwards, ‘Identifying the Archaeology of the Early Church in Wales and Cornwall’, in Blair and Pyrah (eds), *Church Archaeology*, 6–12, 53.

168. What follows is based on Andy Boddington, ‘Modes of Burial, Settlement and Worship’, in Edward Southworth (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries*, Stroud, Sutton, 1991, 177–89; Jack Watkins, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Grave Mystery’, *Heritage Today* (September 2006), 40–2; Mike Pitts, ‘Kent Anglo-Saxon Cemetery Could Be Royal’, *British Archaeology*, 100 (2008), 9; Stephen J. Sherlock and Mark Simmons, ‘The Last Royal Cult of Street House’, ibid., 30–7; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, 58–65; Taylor, *Burial Practice in Early England*, 135–9; Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 212–19; Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons*, 163–78; Helen Geake, ‘Burial in Seventh- and Eighth-Century England’, in Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1994, 83–94; and *The Use of Grave Goods in Conversion-Period*

England, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1997; Sam Lucy *et al.*, *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Cemetery at Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville, Suffolk*, Cambridge, Cambridge Archaeological Unit, 2009; Richard Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2010; Christopher Scull, *Early Medieval (Late 5th–Early 8th Centuries AD) Cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket, Ipswich, Suffolk*, Leeds, Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2009; Sam Lucy, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire: An Analysis and Reinterpretation*, Oxford, J. & E. Hedges, 1998, 102–8; and *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, 183–4.

169. The major exception is Butler's Field, near Lechlade, Gloucestershire: Angela Boyle *et al.*, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Butler's Field*, Oxford, Oxford Archaeological Unit, 1998.

170. Harold Mytum, *The Origins of Early Christian Ireland*, London, Routledge, 1992; Nancy Edwards, *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*, London, Batsford, 1990, 1–25.

171. Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods in Conversion-Period England*; Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*; Scull, *Early Medieval (Late 5th–Early 8th Centuries AD) Cemeteries*; Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 272–4.

172. Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1992.

173. Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 236–44.

174. Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons*, 135–7.

175. Gilbert Márkus, 'Early Irish Feminism', *New Blackfriars*, 73 (1992), 375–88.

176. Wendy Davies, 'Celtic Women in the Early Middle Ages', in Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (eds), *Images of Women in Antiquity*, London, Routledge, 1983, 145–67. Six years later, Patrick Ford noted that medieval Irish literature, Roman historians and archaeology alike suggested that women had high status in ancient Gaulish, British and Irish society, but that this did not seem to be reflected in the earliest Irish law codes, and that their position actually seemed to improve in the first few centuries of Christianization: 'Celtic Women', *Viator*, 19 (1988), 417–38.

177. Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 223–8; Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons*, 137–8.

178. These are the conclusions of Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 228–44.

179. Martin Carver, 'Early Scottish Monasteries and Prehistory', *Scottish Historical Review*, 87 (2009), 332–51. I am very grateful to Professor Carver for the gift of this article.

180. A first draft of this argument appeared as part of Ronald Hutton, 'How Pagan Were Medieval English Peasants?', *Folklore*, 122 (2011), 235–50.

181. E.g. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971; David Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1989; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, London, Yale University Press, 1992; and 'Religious Belief' in Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormerod (eds), *A Social History of England 1200–1500*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, 340–55; Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995; Richard Davies, 'The Church', in Ralph Griffiths (ed.), *The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, 87–116; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994; Valerie Flint, 'A Magical Universe', in Horrox and Ormerod (eds), *A Social History of England*, 293–339; Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Ritual Constructions of Society', ibid., 369–82; Richard William Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009; Clive Burgess and Noel Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Medieval England*, Donnington, Tyas, 2006; Ian Cowan, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press, 1995; Steve Boardman and Ella Williamson (eds), *The Cult of Saints and of the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2010; Peter Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland*, London, Batsford, 1999; R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales 1063–1415*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, 202–10.

182. Owen, *Rites and Religions*; Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*; Carver *et al.* (ed.), *Signals of Belief*.

183. For Greek and Roman paganism, see Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1985; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, London, Viking, 1986; Tom Derks, *Gods, Temples and Ritual Practices*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 1998; Mary Beard *et al.*, *Religions of Rome*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; Jan D. Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999; J. A. North, *Roman Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000; Robert Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000; Clifford Ando (ed.), *Roman Religion*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2003; Valerie Warrior, *Roman Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006; James B. Rivers, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2007; Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008; Jon D. Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion*, 2nd edition, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010; Daniel Odgen (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Religion*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. The general surveys are

Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*, London, Routledge, 1995; and Ken Dowden, *European Paganism*, London, Routledge, 2000.

184. For the appearance of saints' cults in England, see Lambert, *Christians and Pagans*, 208–11; and Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons*, 140–52.

185. Leonard Moss and Stephen C. Cappanari, 'In Quest of the Black Virgin', in James J. Preston (ed.), *Mother Worship*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

186. The origin of these saints as pagan deities is confidently stated in traditional texts such as Michael J. O'Kelly, 'St Gobnet's House, Ballyvourney', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 57 (1952), 18–40; and Proinsias MacCana, *Celtic Mythology*, London, Hamlyn, 1970, 34–5. Recently there seems to be a tendency to downplay this idea: see Katherine Mckenna, 'Apotheosis and Evanescence', in Joseph Falaky Nagy (ed.), *The Individual in Celtic Literatures*, Dublin, Four Courts, 2001, 74–108; and Dorothy Ann Bray, 'Ireland's Other Apostle', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 59 (2010), 55–70.

187. Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain*, 219–23, discusses Anglo-Saxon legislation regarding Sunday.

188. For this see Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*.

189. This is one of the main arguments of Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*.

190. Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism entre Luther et Voltaire*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1971. Delumeau described the transition from medieval to early modern forms as being the true Christianization of Europe, but even on his own evidence it was more of a move from one sort of Christianity to another, though one which had fewer parallels with and adoptions from paganism.

7 The Legacy of British Paganism

1. Geoffrey Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion. Volume One*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1925, 182–3.

2. Discussed in Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, 112–31.

3. See the famous Victorian historian James Anthony Froude, *The Nemesis of Faith*, London, 1849, 20–1 as an early example of this attitude: he comments how the pagan deities long found a refuge in 'the simple minds of simple men' in the countryside, and boasted that

Christianity itself, now ‘decrepit’, was lingering among the same benighted people, in the same way.

4. Commissioners of Public Works (eds), *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, London, 1840, passim; John Johnson (ed.), *A Collection of the Laws and Canons of the Church of England*, Oxford, 1850, i.219; Arthur West Haddan and William Stubbs (eds), *Councils and Other Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford, 1871, iii.189; Henry Gee and John William Hardy (eds), *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, London, 1896, 41–2. See Audrey Meaney, ‘Anglo-Saxon Idolators and Ecclesiasts from Theodore to Alcuin’, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 5 (1992), 103–27, for a commentary on some of these texts. She rejects one, the so-called *Penitential of Egbert*, as evidence for England, being seemingly a Continental compilation misattributed to the archbishop.

5. For a discussion of these sources, see Meaney, ‘Anglo-Saxon Idolators and Ecclesiasts’, 117–27.

6. Commissioners of Public Works (eds), *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, passim; Dorothy Whitelocke *et al.* (eds), *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, i.304–19, 409–89.

7. A. G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509–1558*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1959; John A. F. Thompson, *The Later Lollards*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1965; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971, 166–73; Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, London, Hambledon, 1984; Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988; Richard Rex, *The Lollards*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002; Fiona Somerset *et al.*, *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2003; Shannon McSheffrey and Norman Tanner (eds), *Lollards of Coventry*, Cambridge, Camden Society 5th series 23 (2003); Judy Anne Ford, *John Mirk’s ‘Festial‘*, Cambridge, Brewer, 2006.

8. Bristol Record Office, D/D/Cd 4, 1535–40. Joseph Bettey first drew my attention to the richness of this ecclesiastical archive.

9. National Archives, KB9, file 40, no. 4.

10. Timothy Lewis (ed.), *The Laws of Howel Dda*, Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, 1912; Richard Melville (ed.), *The Laws of Hywel Dda*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1954.

11. Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Kambriae*.

12. National Library of Wales, Courts of Great Sessions Records. My information on the content of these is derived from conversations with Richard Suggett, who has made a particular study of them, with special regard to cases concerned with religion and magic.

13. Manx National Heritage Library, Liberi Placitorum, Liberi Scaccarrii, and Consistory Court Book of Presentments. I am personally well acquainted with these sources.

14. For different uses of them in this context, see Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, London, Yale University Press, 2002; and F. Marian McNeill, *The Silver Bough*, 3 vols, Glasgow, Mclellan,1959.

15. Mary Beth, *Healing Threads: Traditional Medicines of the Highlands and Islands*, Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2004, 87, 138–40, puts these references into local cultural context.

16. The record is in the Chronicle of Lanercost, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius D VII, f. 192. There is a Latin edition of the chronicle by Joseph Stevenson published by the Maitland Club in 1839, and an English translation by Sir Herbert Maxwell, published in 1913. The innocent should not be misled by a scurrilous tract entitled *Essay on the Worship of the Generative Powers during the Middle Ages in Western Europe*, published in London in 1865 as an appendix to a new adition of Richard Payne Knight, *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*. It was anonymous but was credited at the time to the radical antiquary Thomas Wright, and is an early and extreme example of the modern desire, on which comment was passed above, to see Christianity as a mere veneer over a medieval culture which remained essentially pagan. As such, on pp. 130–1, it recounts the Inverkeithing incident and embellishes it with false details, such as that the priest was pardoned by his bishop for his rites of Bacchus because he insisted that he was carrying on local custom, and that his death occurred in a brawl, with the implication that this was not connected to his interpretation of religion. The same incident was used repeatedly by Margaret Murray, likewise, to support her argument of a continuing paganism through the Middle Ages, and while she did not add any false details to it, she drew one unwarranted inference, and suppressed aspects of the story which told against her interpretation: *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, Oxford University Press, 1921, 23; and *The God of the Witches*, Sampson Low, 1933, 18. 207. It was left to Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1972, 164–5, to provide an accurate version of the record and draw the conclusion that it did not support Murray's argument.

17. W. H. Mandy, 'An Incident at Bexley', *Woolwich and District Antiquarian Society Annual Report and Transactions*, 23 (1920–5), 25–37.

18. Nicholas Orme, ‘Bishop Grandisson and Popular Religion’, *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 124 (1992), 107–18.

19. Ludo Milis, ‘Introduction’, and ‘Conclusion’, in Ludo J. R. Milis (ed.), *The Pagan Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1998, 1–10, 151–6. For an identical view from a scholar of Victorian popular culture, see James Obelkevitch, *Religion and Society in South Lindsey 1825–1875*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1976. He routinely uses the term ‘paganism’ for the non-Christian elements in popular religion, while emphasizing that ‘it was not a counter-religion to Christianity; rather, the two coexisted and complemented each other’, and that the ‘pagan’ traditions represented ‘not a cosmos to be contemplated or worshipped but a treasury of separate and specific resources to be used and applied in concrete situations’ (pp. 280–1).

20. John van Engen, ‘The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem’, *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 519–52.

21. This is a view supported by another notable scholar of ancient and medieval religion, R. A. Markus, who attacked the view taken by the school of French historians around Jacques Le Goff, in the 1970s, that if the medieval populace in a given area had a different culture from the elite it could not by definition be Christian: *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 4–14. At the opposite extreme from Le Goff is now C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 76–106, who classes together Norman Cohn, Carlo Ginzburg, Jean Delumeau and myself as historians who have argued for a degree of pagan survivals in medieval culture which, even by the definition of ideas and images left over from ancient paganism, he finds unhelpful. He prefers instead to speak of such phenomena as ‘non-Christian’, or ‘magic’, but to me such differences are merely personal choices of semantics. I agree entirely with his point that ‘pagan’ could mean very different things in different periods and that medieval churchmen commonly deployed it to condemn forms of Christianity of which they disapproved.

22. Ronald Hutton, ‘The Roots of Modern Paganism’, in Charlotte Hardman and Graham Harvey (eds), *Paganism Today*, London, Thorsons, 1996, 3–15.

23. ‘Female Fertility Figures’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 64 (1934), 93–100.

24. ‘The Green Man in Church Architecture’, *Folklore*, 50 (1939), 45–57.

25. ‘The Divine Hag of the Pagan Celts’, in Venetia Newall (ed.), *The Witch Figure*, London, Routledge, 1973, 139–64.

26. Ronald Sheridan and Anne Ross, *Grotesques and Gargoyles*, Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1975.

27. Clearly it has been good to see them brought into the public eye in this way, but the process has occasionally been to the detriment of the images themselves: in 2004 the sheela-na-gig in the church at Buncton in West Sussex was destroyed in what was treated as 'an act of Christian protest'. One parishioner condemned the vandalism, but still stated that there was no place for a 'pagan symbol' in a church: Jacqueline Simpson, 'Sheela at Buncton Destroyed', *Folklore Society Newsletter*, 46 (2005), 4–5. On the other hand, the recent relation of the images to female empowerment and goddess worship has inspired some good guides to and gazetteers of them, listed in Rosemary Power's article in n. 37 below.

28. Roy Judge, *The Jack-in-the-Green*, London, Folklore Society, 1979.

29. Kathleen Basford, *The Green Man*, Ipswich, Brewer, 1978; Rita Wood, 'Before the Green Man', *Medieval Life*, 14 (2000), 8–13; Mercia MacDermott, *Explore Green Men*, Wymeswold, Heart of Albion, 2003; Richard Hayman, 'Green Men and the Way of All Flesh', *British Archaeology*, 100 (2008), 12–17; and 'Ballad of the Green Man', *History Today*, 60.4 (2010), 37–44; Alex Woodcock, *Liminal Images*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2005, 47–63. A mid-twentieth-century extension of the Green Man idea by literary critics had been to identify the Green Knight in the famous fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as another appearance of the same fertility deity. This was contested in turn by Bella Millett, 'How Green is the Green Knight', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 38 (1994), 138–51; though it is worth noting that even Roger Sherman Loomis, the American literary scholar who had done so much to find pagan origins for motifs in the Arthurian legend, thought any for the Green Knight doubtful: *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, London, Hutchinson, 1963, 9.

30. Jörgen Andersen, *The Witch on the Wall*, Copenhagen, Rosenkilde & Bogger, 1977; Anthony Weir and James Jerman, *Images of Lust*, London, Batsford, 1986.

31. Malcolm Thurlby, *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture*, Almeley, Logaston, 1999.

32. Brandon S. Centerwall, 'The Name of the Green Man', *Folklore*, 108 (1997), 25–33.

33. See sources at n. 9.

34. Hayman, 'Green Men and the Way of All Flesh'.

35. Sally Mittuch, 'Medieval Art of Death and Resurrection', *Current Archaeology*, 209 (2007), 34–40.

36. Cited in Andersen, *The Witch on the Wall*, 23.

37. Eamonn Kelly, 'Sheela-na-gigs in the National Museum of Ireland', in Michael Ryan (ed.), *Irish Antiquities*, Bray, Wordwell, 1992, 173–84; Catherine Karkov, 'Sheela-na-gigs and Other Unruly Women', in Collum Hourihane (ed.), *From Ireland Coming*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2001, 313–31. Eamonn Kelly, 'Irish Sheela-na-gigs and Related Figures', in Nicola McDonald (ed.), *Medieval Obscenities*, York, York Medieval Press, 2006, 124–37; Etienne Rynne, 'A Pagan Celtic Background for Sheela-na-gigs', in Helen M. Roe (ed.), *Figures from the Past*, Dublin, Glendale, 1987, 189–204. Rosemary Power has recently made a strong argument for the figures as magical images intended to ward off evil (though against any association with goddesses), working mainly from the Irish evidence: 'Iona's Sheela-na-Gig and its Visual Context', *Folklore*, 123 (2012), 330–54.

38. Kelly, 'Irish Sheela-na-gigs'.

39. Abegael Saward, 'The Rocky Valley Labyrinths', *Caerdroia*, 32 (2001), 21–7.

40. The historical outline provided below is taken from Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1990; W. M. S. and Claire Russell, 'English Turf Mazes, Troy and the Labyrinth', *Folklore*, 102 (1991), 77–88; Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, Munich, Prestel, English edition, 2000; and Craig Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2001, to which I have added my own comments.

41. For which see Jeff Saward, *The Labyrinth*, Thundersley, Caerdroia, 1990; Sig Lonegren, *Labryinths*, Glastonbury, Gothic Image, 1991; Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior*, 1–5.

42. The story to this point may be found, in detail and with full source references, in Ronald Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, London, Hambledon and London, 2003, 65–79.

43. Charles and Nancy Hollinrake, 'An Archaeological Watching Brief at Glastonbury Tor during the Entrances and Pathways Enhancement', unpublished report kept in Glastonbury Public Library. Nancy Hollinrake telephoned me to ask me in person if I would publicize the existence of this work in a future publication of mine; and I am keeping faith with her here. The *Landscape Mysteries* television series, which dated the Long Man of Wilmington (for whom see later in this section) sponsored a bore for pollen data on the Tor, which provided evidence that the slopes of the hill were thickly forested during the Neolithic and Bronze Age, another piece of information which tells against a prehistoric date for the terraces.

44. The best history of these is still Morris Marples, *White Horses and Other Hill Figures*, London, Country Life Books, 1949.

45. For a good traditional description of both, with a bibliography of works on them until that date, see Paul Newman, *Lost Gods of Albion*, Stroud, Sutton, 1997.

46. For what follows, see Timothy Darvill *et al.*, *The Cerne Giant*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1999, and especially the section edited and contributed to by myself on pp. 69–124; and Martin Bell and Ronald Hutton, 'Not So Long Ago', *British Archaeology*, 77 (2004), 17–21.

47. Chris Lovegrove, 'An Earthly Paradise', *Pendragon*, 29 (2001), 22–26.

48. A classic restatement of this is J. Daryll Evans, *The Churchyard Yews of Gwent*, Pontypool, Archangel, 1988.

49. This story is summarized, with the data, in Anand Chetan and Diana Brueton, *The Sacred Yew*, London, Arkana, 1994.

50. One of the most remarkable of these is Fred Hageneder, *Yew: A History*, Stroud, Sutton, 2007, which, while some of its ideas remain speculative, contains much valuable research.

51. 'How Old *is* that Old Yew?', *At the Edge*, 4 (1996), 1–9.

52. Such a claim has been made for the churchyard yew at Tandridge in Surrey, but Harte found it to be false. He has made a good case that the tree which grew at Fortingall in Perthshire was a major landmark and meeting place before Christianity, but not that it was regarded as sacred then: though this is distinctly possible.

53. I think here of Robert Bevan-Jones, *The Ancient Yew*, Macclesfield, Windgather, 2002.

54. Barry Cunliffe, *The City of Bath*, Gloucester, Sutton, 1986, 44–91.

55. James Rattue, *The Living Stream*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1995; Jeremy Harte, *English Holy Wells*, Wymeswold, Heart of Albion, 2008. Their findings for England are compatible with the older and (in historical respects) less systematic work for other regions of Britain: M. and L. Quiller-Couch, *Ancient and Holy Wells of Cornwall*, London, 1894; Francis Jones, *The Holy Wells of Wales*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1954; Ruth and Frank Morris, *Scottish Healing Wells*, Sandy, Alethea, 1982.

56. Brian Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1998, 18.

57. David Stocker and Paul Everson, ‘The Straight and Narrow Way’, in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North*, York, York Medieval Press, 2003, 271–88.

58. Ibid., 281.

59. Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition: A Window on the Iron Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1964.

60. Source references for this process may be found in Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, 147–9; with more added from J. P. Mallory, ‘The World of Cu Chulainn’, in J. P. Mallory (ed.), *Aspects of the Tain*, Belfast, Universities Press, 1992, 147–9.

61. For a concise summary of these conclusions, see ibid.; and Ruari Ó hUiginn, ‘The Background and Development of Tain bo Cuailnge’, in Mallory (ed.), *Aspects of the Tain*, 32–62.

62. Mallory, ‘The World of Cu Chulainn’, 153.

63. Proinsias MacCana, ‘Mythology and the Oral Tradition’, in Miranda J. Green (ed.), *The Celtic World*, London, Routledge, 1995, 779–84.

64. Raimund Karl, ‘Random Coincidences’, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 74 (2008), 69–78.

65. The sources are all listed and discussed in Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*, London, Yale University Press, 2009, 145–82, 241–63.

66. Ibid., 313–14. Even those poems which Williams did allot to the sixth century are now considered by some experts to be much later; but that is not of relevance here.

67. For an extended argument of this section, and the paragraphs that follow, and full source references, see Ronald Hutton, ‘Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 61 (2011), 57–85.

68. Here ends the material developed and referenced fully in the article cited just above.

69. The latest edition and analysis of these is Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, Aberystwyth, CMCS, 2007.

70. Ibid., 313–19; Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1978, 42, 103, 198, 308, 463–4; Patrick Ford, *Ystoria Taliesin*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1992.

71. This story is told in full, with complete references, in Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 172–9.

72. The version which I have to hand is the 1906 Dent one: the reference is on p. 429 of that.

73. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 259–63.

74. Ifor Williams, *Chwedl Taliesin*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1960, 3–4; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 308–9; Ifor Williams, *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry*, Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1944, 59–65. Williams's derivation of the name is now regarded as unsound, but there seems to be no agreement on an alternative, and the true origins of it may be lost, candidates being 'fevered woman', 'passionate woman', or 'woman with the angular embrace'(!). See Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, 318–19.

75. Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain*, London, Cardinal edition, 1974, 290.

76. Graham Webster, *The British Celts and their Gods under Rome*, London, Batsford, 1986; Miranda Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, Gloucester, Sutton, 1986.

77. Miranda Green, *Celtic Goddesses*, London, British Museum, 1995, 68–9.

78. Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 323. I was harsh partly because of my knowledge of the origins of Ceridwen's divine attribution, in Edward Davies, and her absence from the 1980s' works on pagan 'Celtic' religion, and partly because it seemed to me odd that dubious goddesses like Ceridwen should have such a presence in the modern imagination – thanks to old and flawed scholarship – while so many undoubted and striking ancient British goddesses, attested from the archaeological record, were completely missing from it.

79. Miranda J. Green, 'Vessels of Death', *Antiquaries' Journal*, 78 (1998), 63–84.

80. E.g. Edward Davies, *The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids*, London, 1809; John Rhys, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, Oxford, 1891; Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, New York, 1927; Alfred Nutt, *Studies in the Legend of the Holy Grail*, London, 1888; Jessie Laidley Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, New York, 1925.

81. A notable contributor here has been John Darrah, *The Real Camelot*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1981; and *Paganism in Arthurian Romance*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1994. Darrah's detection criteria for paganism are 'strange behaviour and an uncanny atmosphere', which will naturally net a large number of likely instances in any literature (*Paganism in Arthurian Romance*, p. 14).

82. I am inclined to think that it is a survival; but Brendan Smith has cautioned me, very properly, that this is only a possibility and I may underestimate the creative power of the medieval mind: pers. comm., 15 October 2012.

83. For all that follows in this section, see Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, with some additional material in Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 112–31.

84. For the telling of this story with full source references, see Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 132–50, 194–201, 272–86, 369–88.

85. Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, London, Penguin, 1990, 8–9.

86. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, London, Chatto and Heinemann, 1975.

87. Gustav Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate*, Reno, University of Nevada Press, 1980; 'The Ladies from Outside', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern Witchcraft*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980, 191–218; 'The Witches' Flying and the Spanish Inquisitors', *Folklore*, 120 (2009), 57–74.

88. Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 306–7.

89. Relatively recent outstanding contributions include James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, London, Hamilton, 1996; Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, London, Routledge, 1996; Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997; Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze*, London, Yale University Press, 2004; Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, Harlow, Pearson, 3rd edition, 2006; Robin Briggs, *The Witches of Lorraine*, 2007; Julian Goodare *et al.* (eds), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Stephen Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

90. Any representative selection should include Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*; Eva Pocs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 1998; Wolfgang Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1998; Henningsen, 'The Ladies from Outside'; and 'The Witches' Flying and the Spanish Inquisitors'.

91. For easy overviews of ancient attitudes to witchcraft, see the first two volumes of the series *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark for the Athlone Press in 1999–2001; and Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2004, 1–51.

92. Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, VIII.18, XXXIX.41, XL.43.

93. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, lines 1526–75; Horace, Epode V and Satire VIII; Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Queenes*, lines 1–35.

94. Marie-Louise Thomsen, 'Witchcraft in Ancient Mesopotamia', in Ankarloo and Clark (eds), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. Volume One*, 25–7.

95. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 2nd edition, London, Pimlico, 1993, 162–66.

96. Ibid.; Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989; Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts*, 47–57. It should perhaps be emphasized that a comparatively low total of executions, in relation to what came before or after, could still produce some large local figures.

97. For general overviews, see Levack, *The Witch-Hunt*; Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts*; and Geoffrey Scarre and John Callow, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001.

98. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, London, Routledge, 1983.

99. The best recent accounts of the Scottish witch trials are Julian Goodare (ed.), *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002; and 'The Aberdeenshire Witchcraft Panic of 1597', *Northern History*, 21 (2001), 17–38; Stuart Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife*, East Linton, Tuckwell, 2002; P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches*, Stroud, Tempus, 2005; Goodare *et al.* (eds), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*; Brian Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, London, Routledge, 2008.

100. Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits*, Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2005; and *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2010. I would emphasize that, the question of the shamanic component aside, these works do bring us closer than others to understanding the possible thought-worlds of people accused of witchcraft in early modern Britain; and the shamanic comparison is itself well worth making.

101. Julian Goodare, 'The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland', *Folklore*, 123 (2012), 198–212.

102. For what follows, see Ronald Hutton, 'The Global Context of the Scottish Witch-Hunt', in Goodare (ed.), *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, 16–32; and 'Witch-Hunting in Celtic Societies', *Past and Present*, 212 (2012), 43–71.

103. Key works on the subject in Britain include Minor White Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1930; Katharine Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck*, London, Routledge, 1959; and *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*, London, Routledge, 1967; Diane Purkiss, *Troublesome Things*, London, Allen Lane, 2000; Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, East Linton, Tuckwell, 2001; and Jeremy Harte, *Explore Fairy Traditions*, Loughborough, Heart of Albion Press, 2004. Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, 686–92, presents an excellent brief summary of the relationship between high medieval English thought and these beings.

104. Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, London, 1703, 28–9.

105. Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, Edinburgh, 1900, i.163.

106. The controversy and its conclusion are well summarized in John MacInnes's preface to the Floris edition of *Carmina Gadelica*, Edinburgh, 1992.

107. Jeremy Harte, 'Herne the Hunter', *At the Edge*, 3 (1996), 27–33.

108. Susan Cooper, *The Dark is Rising*, Chatto & Windus, 1975; Goldcrest Productions, *Robin of Sherwood* (1983–5).

109. Certainly this is true in practice: witness, for example, the cults now built around the superhumans in the novels of H. P. Lovecraft.

110. Especially notable among such scholars were Godfrid Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, Halle, 1948; and J. H. G. Grattan and Charles Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1952.

111. Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996, 122, 140.

112. Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms and Charming in Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2004.

113. Translations can be found in Jolly, *Popular Religion*, 125–7; Bill Griffiths, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Magic*, Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Anglo-Saxon Books, revised edition, 2003, 180–5; and Grattan and Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 152–4.

114. Griffiths, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 174.

115. John Frankis, 'Sidelights on Post-Conquest Canterbury', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 22 (2000), 1–27.

116. British Library Cotton MS Caligula A7, fos 176a-178a. Translations are in Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 172–87; Jolly, *Popular Religion*, 6–8; Griffiths, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 175–9; Grattan and Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 62–3.

117. Grattan and Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 45–6; A. D. Nock, 'Some Latin Spells', *Folklore*, 36 (1925), 93–6; J. Wight Duff and Arnold M. Duff (eds), *Minor Latin Poets*, Cambridge, MA, 1934, 339–50, where it is anthologized as a literary work as it deserves.

118. Roper (ed.), *Charms and Charming*; Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 84–111; Owen Davies, 'Charmers and Charming in England and Wales from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century', *Folklore*, 109 (1998), 41–52; and sources cited in those.

119. For this see especially Veronique Charon, 'The Knowledge of Herbs', in Milis (ed.), *The Pagan Middle Ages*, 109–28.

120. The best overall survey is Owen Davies, *Cunning Folk*, London, Hambledon and London, 2003; see also Hutton *Triumph of the Moon*, 84–111.

121. Identified, with the drawing of different implications, by Grattan and Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*; and Jolly, *Popular Religion*.

122. Griffiths, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 173.

123. Jolly, *Popular Religion*, 170.

124. See the strictures of Karen Harvey in her introduction to her edition of essays, *History and Material Culture*, London, Routledge, 2009, 1.

125. This is a theme of Chris Gosden and Frances Larson, *Knowing Things*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

126. Ralph Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, London, Batsford, 1987, 118–29.

127. Brian Hoggard, 'The Archaeology of Counter-Witchcraft and Popular Magic', in Owen Davies and Willem de Blecourt (eds), *Beyond the Witch Trials*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004, 167–86; and his website, www.apotropaios.co.uk.

128. Sources as in previous note.

129. June Swann, 'Shoes Concealed in Buildings', *Costume*, 30 (1996), 56–69.

130. George Roberts, *The Social History of the People of the Southern Counties of England in Past Centuries*, London, 1856, 530.

131. Carol van Driel-Murray, ‘And did those Feet in Ancient Time … Feet and Shoes as a Material Projection of the Self’, in Patricia Baker *et al.* (eds), *TRAC 98*, Oxford, Oxbow, 1999, 131–40.

132. Brian Hoggard’s Apotropaios site; Margaret M. Howard, ‘Dried Cats’, *Man*, 61 (1951), 148–51. Howard mentions a possible textual parallel, of the case of some workmen on a cottage at Falmouth in 1890, who said that their construction needed the sacrifice of ‘a virgin hare trapped by a virgin boy’ to the ‘outside gods’. This is tantalizing, but hares are not recorded in buildings, the incident was not reported until the mid twentieth century and so is doubtful, and, if it occurred, the men might have been joking.

133. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, 118–29; Hoggard, ‘The Archaeology of Counter-Witchcraft’.

134. Giorgio Riello, ‘Things that Shape History’, in Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture*, 24–46; Dinah Eastop, ‘Garments Deliberately Concealed in Buildings’, in Robert Wallis and Kenneth Lymer (eds), *A Permeability of Boundaries?*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 2001, 179–83; *www.concealedgarments.org/publications* (the Deliberately Concealed Garments Project).

135. Ian Joseph Evans, ‘Touching Magic’, University of Newcastle, Australia, PhD thesis, 2011. It is noted in this thesis, and needs to be stated here, that the ritual concealment of objects in buildings is also found in Continental Europe: it is a ubiquitous inheritance from the ancient world.

136. Hoggard, ‘The Archaeology of Counter-Witchcraft’; and the Apotropaios site; C. J. Binding and L. J. Wilson, ‘Ritual Protection Marks in Goatchurch Cavern’, *Proceedings of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society*, 23 (2004), 119–33; ‘Ritual Protection Marks in Wookey Hole and Long Hole, Somerset’, forthcoming in *Proceedings of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society*; Timothy Easton, ‘Apotropaic Marks Scribed and Scratched in Barns and Houses’, *Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History Newsletter*, 27 (1988), 7–8; ‘Scribed and Painted Symbols’, in Paul Oliver (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World. Volume One*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 533–4; ‘Ritual Marks on Historic Timber’, *Third Stone*, 38 (2000), 11–17; Evans, ‘Touching Magic’.

137. The conjoined Vs are present on a wooden bowl found in the *Mary Rose*, which sank in 1545, and I was informed by its curator that they are also present on at least one timber of the ship itself, constructed between 1509 and 1511: Mary Rose Museum, Portsmouth.

138. Virginia Lloyd *et al.*, ‘Burn Marks as Evidence of Apotropaic Practices in Houses, Farm Buildings and Churches in Post-Medieval East Anglia’, in Wallis and Lymer (eds), *A Permeability*

of Boundaries, 57–70.

139. Timothy Easton, ‘Candle Powers’, *Cornerstone*, 32 (2011), 56–60.

140. I was shown these markings in August 2007 by my friend, the novelist Alan Garner, as part of his remarkable knowledge of the folkways of his native north-eastern Cheshire. It is of a piece with this that Alan also pointed out the significance of the style of the shoes.

141. The information for the British context is summarized in Hutton, *Pagan Religions*, 241–2.

142. An argument made above all in Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain*, London, Routledge 1967, pp. 91–174 in the Cardinal edition of 1974. See also Sidney Jackson, *Celtic and Other Stone Heads*, privately published, 1975.

143. John Billingsley, *Stony Gaze*, Chieveley, Capall Bann, 1998.

144. In 1996–7 an elderly man in Anglesey created a stir in the Welsh mass media by claiming to be a member of a pagan cult on the island, which had survived from ancient times and was focused on stone heads, one of which was in the island museum. This turns out to be a classic example of the seventeenth-century type identified by Billingsley, complete with the hole that a clay pipe fits. This makes it all the more likely that the cult – if it ever existed – was a revival rather than a survival, but no evidence was ever produced for its existence, though the man claimed it to have been over a thousand strong, and he now seems to have disappeared.

145. Simon de Bruxelles, ‘Mysterious Pits Shed Lights on Forgotten Witches of the West’, *The Times*, 10 March 2008; Kate Ravilious, ‘Witches of Cornwall’, *Archaeology*, 61 (2008), at *www.archaeology.org/0811/etc/witches.html*, accessed 4 November 2011.

146. The details of English laws against witchcraft have been readily available since the pioneering work of L’Estrange Ewen in the 1920s and 1930s, followed by that of Alan Macfarlane in 1970. Recently, excellent surveys of the subject have been provided by James Sharpe: *Instruments of Darkness*; and *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, Harlow, Longman, 2001.

147. What follows is based on Ronald Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, 137–92; and ‘Astral Magic’, in Nicholas Campion *et al.* (eds), *Astrology and the Academy*, Bristol, Cinnabar Books, 2004, 10–24; where full references may be found.

148. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 90–5.

149. A point first emphasized in this context by Peter Ucko, *Anthropomorphic Figurines of Predynastic Egypt and Neolithic Crete*, London, Royal Anthropological Institute, 1968, 411.

150. For example, Hecate in Lycia, Ephesian Artemis in Lydia, and Cybele in Phrygia. It was Sir James Frazer who popularized the idea that all these deities should be fused (with others) into ‘a great Mother Goddess, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature’, an exemplar of the Edwardian belief in the former universal existence of such a figure: *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, London, 1907, 34–6.

151. Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976, passim. This was the book which laid down the prevailing interpretation of the evolution of Mesopotamian religion as well as being an excellent introduction to it.

152. Richard North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 44–77, contains the most recent discussion of it. Hilda Ellis Davidson has found hints in the medieval Scandinavian literary texts of a ‘supreme and powerful goddess’ as well as the multiplicity of local counterparts, but concludes that these are ‘vague and suggestive merely’ (and does not link them to the earth): *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe*, London, Routledge, 1993, 108–11.

153. The first five of those were cited by Ucko, *Anthropomorphic Figurines*, 410. I have added the others.

154. Brian Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1972, 44–102; Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, 96–7.

155. This discrepancy was noted by Ucko, *Anthropomorphic Figurines*, 410. Likewise, Nicole Loraux noted that the Greeks did sometimes speak of ‘The Mother’ and more rarely identified her with the earth, but could not agree on whether she was one goddess or several, and Greek or Asiatic. Loraux adds that ‘in short, nothing is certain’, and that modern scholars have made the matter much worse; presumably a reference to the modern belief in a universal ancient Mother Goddess: ‘What is a Goddess’, in Pauline Schmitt Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women in the West: Volume One*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1992, 11–44. Sue Blundell has emphasized that over half of the goddesses most worshipped in ancient Greece were virgins, and that these included most of those helpful to humanity: Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, London, British Museum, 1995, 25–46.

156. The belief that she was a more important one, which still features at times in popular handbooks and encyclopaedias of ancient mythology or religion, is based mainly on Lewis Richard Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1907, iii.1–28. Influenced by the prevailing scholarly belief in a universal prehistoric mother goddess, he argued for her former supremacy from the literary texts and from conjectural reconstructions of

inscriptions and attributions of statues. He still ended up concluding (on p. 28) that ‘this cult has scarcely a point of contact with the more advanced life of the [Greek] race … it seems that she must disguise herself under other names’. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1985, 175, was more forthright, pointing out her large place in the literature of ‘speculation’ while adding that ‘in customary religion the role of Gaia is exceedingly modest’, confined mainly to the pouring of libations. Jennifer Larson, ‘A Land Full of Gods’, in Daniel Ogden (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Religion*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 67, considers her role in city states and finds it ‘widespread yet never prominent’, consisting of a statue or place for offerings in a few sanctuaries of her son or grandson Zeus, and an annual offering in two local religious calendars.

157. H. J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion*, London, 1948, 25.

158. Mary Beard *et al.*, *Religions of Rome*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, i.203, ii.142.

159. George D. Economou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1972, 28–52.

160. What follows in this paragraph is based on Hutton, *Witches, Druids and King Arthur*, 96–7, 166–85. A parallel process to the enlargement of the role of Mother Earth and Mother Nature in Christian medieval thought is that of how Pan, a relatively minor Greek god (though one with important local cults), was given a greater prominence in medieval Christian writings because of two accidents: a story, recorded by Plutarch, that he had died (which was held to be the direct result of the Crucifixion), and the fact that his name was misinterpreted, because of a philological coincidence as meaning ‘everything’: Patricia Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1969, 1–42. This paved the way (eventually) for a much more glorious place for him in modern literature.

161. This image is on the frontispieces to Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi historia*, Oppenheim, 1617; and Athansius Kircher, *Ars magica lucis et umbrae*, Rome, 1646.

162. A story told in Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 32–42. The parallel burgeoning of the literary cult of Pan is on pp. 43–51.

163. For which see the works of Owen Davies and myself, cited in n. 120.

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